A FRENCHMAN'S IMPRESSIONS OF IRELAND SCOTLAND WALES

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UNDER THE ENGLISH CROWN

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BY

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HODDER AND STOUGHTON
PUBLISHERS LONDON

Printed in 1906

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PREFACE

THE prevailing custom of calling the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland simply *England* shows clearly enough which is considered the dominating element in the Union. Under the English Crown the formerly independent nations of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales have now been formed into a single complex monarchy, the predominance of Celtic blood in the three last producing political forms bound by their very nature sooner or later to be superseded.

Happily the spirit of a nation will survive its independence, and after long and painful struggles will stamp its own individuality upon all customs, laws, and institutions. Each of the above-mentioned countries has ceased to be a state—all three have continued to remain nations. The first thing a traveller is conscious of in any one of them is the national spirit, such as soil, climate, and the vicissitudes of its destiny have

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made it. The very landscapes — so closely associated always with a country's history— seem to whisper of it, while behind the life of to-day one is always conscious of its presence, invisible but undeniable. It has the charm indeed of some mysterious and veiled figure, which lures us through the desire to penetrate its secret.

I have visited in this fashion the fascinating wildness of Scotland, peacefully united to England through the accession of James VI. to Elizabeth's throne,—then Wales, last refuge of the ancient Britons, where as behind a fortress they made their final stand before defeat, and where they now remain, hidden and as if half asleep, awaiting the moment when, loyal subjects still, they will be granted an independent legislative existence, —and finally Ireland, oppressed and rebellious Ireland, true "Ireland of Sorrow," whose long and tragic confusions promise at last to solve themselves without further catastrophe, the last act of the drama ringing down upon the dawn of a new and happier era.

Nowhere is it more interesting than in Ireland to see how the present has issued from the past. The two, in fact, are so closely united that it is

often difficult to separate one from the other. But when the mind grows dubious, the curious harmony which exists between the country, the ruins, and the people helps one to reach, across the poetry of its past destiny, to the very essence of its national life. For it is, after all, life, with all its conditions, exigences, changes, and political and economical complexities, that a country lays bare. And the true traveller suddenly realises that he should know everything and understand everything, and along with much special knowledge possess the artist's, the historian's, and the psychologist's temperament.

I need hardly say how far I have fallen short of this ambition. In my impressions of Ireland, Wales, and Scotland I have merely tried to penetrate sufficiently far into the interior of things as to realise in some degree their unity. If in so doing I have mingled history and impressions of travel, sight-seeing and reflections upon that sight-seeing, psychology and a sense of the picturesque, it is because in the little I was able to convey of each I had only even then just enough material for the composition of this small volume.

F. R.

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IRELAND

CHAPTER I

Nature

Poetically to call Ireland "the Emerald Isle" is by no means to say the last word on the subject. It is not even to make the essential statement.

The expression conveys an idea of cheerful warmth and unbroken splendour. It brings to mind the notion of a green basket resting upon the sea; it recalls the brightness of velvet lawns; it suggests a fairy garden mysteriously uprisen from some Atlantis. Ireland as a country is both more varied and more harsh. It has bleak mountains, dreary moors, stony wastes, dismal bogs, and jagged coasts worn by bluey-green seas. On the other hand it has wide and tranquil bays, lakes interminably passing on into other lakes, great pools with vague indefinite shores, rivers, streams, and threadlike waterfalls —an inextricable confusion of running and still

waters, which gives the country a look of being perpetually in flood. In addition, the green of the grass-land is so soft in tone that it is much more suggestive of the freshness of damp earth than the hard transparency of a precious stone.

After thirty days of every kind of peregrination, by train, boat, carriage, or on foot, over mountains and along cliffs, some few recollections stand out predominantly from the mass of impressions with which, after days overcrowded with sight-seeing, a tourist's mind is full. And the main recollections are concerned with the setting in which the life and history of Ireland have been passed. They are indeed the foundation upon which every effort to realise the present, or to recall the past, must be based.

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To a Frenchman starting from Dublin, and travelling first of all through the counties of Meath, Louth, West Meath, and King's and Queen's Counties, there is a curious sense of familiarity. Excursions to Dundalk, Drogheda, Mullingar, Athlone, Portarlington, and Maryborough, still keep him from violent consciousness of being in a strange country. The scenery is not very different from that of an undulating

plain in France, richer in pasture than in ploughland, strewn with tiny cottages, and here and there, in the more lonely places, with little whitewashed houses, rising singly or in pairs against the line of low blue hills in the distance. Taken altogether the impression is not one of picturesqueness or grandeur, but of a friendly country, full of natural fertility, though lacking cultivation. Everywhere there are cows, bright green hedges, a variety of shrubs, and just enough trees to break the monotony of the plains. Here and there one sees little slopes divided into squares of pale yellow or soft green, occasionally a little wood, and always in the distance, rising between the trees, the slender lines of a tall steeple.

But gradually the aspect of the country changes. So easily in Ireland the land seems to grow sad and moist, and the pleasant fields to be cut up by purple-coloured moors and stretches of dreary waste-land. Here blocks of peat lie heaped near the spot from which they have been cut, while the country grows more and more uninhabited, hardly a house showing to give a touch of humanity to the solitude. A few ricks of hay, a few fields of beetroot, potatoes, cabbages, are the only visible signs of man's presence.

Marshes and peat bogs are incessant, pools grow into ponds, and ponds into loughs, till the solid earth seems everywhere invaded by water. One ends by no longer even noticing the intrusion. Moreover, occurring unostentatiously and in a thinly populated country, the inundation is as a rule harmless. Still I remember one scene concerning it, whose melancholy had an almost mysterious quality. I was going one twilight evening from Portrush to Londonderry. The train, having skirted the coast, had just cut across the neck of Magilligan, and the light was fading softly from the peaceful landscape which I could just discern through the gathering darkness. Suddenly I was struck by a stretch of unexpected light, and perceived long lines of silvered water gleaming with the quivering brightness one may sometimes see upon the surface of sea or lake after the sun has set, or before the moon has risen. Yet we were facing neither, for a number of hedges and trees rising between showed that these spaces of luminous silver were in reality fields submerged by water. Presently we came upon houses also floating in the gloomy stillness, and it became evident that the country was flooded.

The train stopped at a tiny station full of Sunday holiday-makers. They were singing and laughing, and the place was noisy with Sunday traffic. I looked and wondered where these people could have come from, and where they could be going to; and as I passed on again into the dim country I felt as if the whole impression had been more a dream than a reality.

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Whether the land rises to encompass a valley, or the hills slope down to enfold a lake, nothing more seems needed in Ireland to produce the most exquisite glen scenery. This is what you get in County Wicklow, in Clare, Glenmalure, and Ovoca, and above all in the tender, melancholy wildness of the valley of Glendalough. Strewn with ruins, the latter looks like some gentle oasis left by the past, while its beauty is as a thing kept in an eternal sleep, so tranquil is it, and so appeased. Grassy slopes rise on each side of the two little lakes, whose waters are almost black towards the edges. The grey ruins of what were once "The Seven Churches" add a touch of historical interest to the beauty of the scene. Tall and straight in the centre of the valley rises the round tower, one of the

mysterious solitary towers which, at some unknown period, and for some unknown reason, were erected all over Ireland. Here it has the appearance of an extinguished lighthouse, of a belfry smitten with silence, or of a colossal stone candle planted in some sacred solitude. . . .

It needed an actual effort to break the charm and to turn away from a spot so full of enchantment and peace. We came through moors covered with purple heather, and though here and there the road revealed a cheerful and cultivated valley, it gradually became more and more bleak, while the sky grew greyer in sympathy. One might have been crossing the gloomy country round about Lugnaquilla, —queen among the mountains of Wicklow, — whose summit rises so clearly and sharply above that of her sisters. As we passed, the sound of lowing cattle rose in the darkness. We were leaving behind us the valley of Glendalough, and already what we had seen was taking on an added grace through sharp and sudden contrast.

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The scenery of Glendalough is repeated in a bolder and more diversified fashion as one nears the coast, until, in an entanglement of bays,

loughs, and islands, the magic juxtaposition of mountains and sea breaks upon one's sight. The first time I saw this I was far from expecting anything of the kind. I had taken a jaunting-car from Londonderry to go and see the remains of an old historic fort, the Grianan of Aileach, a few miles from the town. The driver stopped outside the wooden gates of a farmyard, and pointed to a stony-looking pathway leading up the hill. As I took it, the country slowly crept into sight on my right, until suddenly it emerged in its entirety. In the distance the waters of Lough Swilly and Lough Foyle slipped between the mountains like ribbons of pale-blue silk, while all the morning's light seemed reflected on their surface. The mountains themselves, with their curious mixture of gentle undulations and clear-cut outlines, were finally lost in a grey-blue mist. Their silhouettes crossed each other against the sky, and though the beauty of the scene had something unreal and impossible, it had at the same time something not wholly unfamiliar to me. I thought of the landscape set at the back of La Gioconda, and seemed to see it once again, merely enlarged and purified by the powerful serenity of actual nature.

Another day I went by coach from Clifden to Westport, taking the road that goes through the moors of Connemara, past the west side of the Twelve Pins, round the hills of Maamturk, and down to the bay of Killary, at the foot of the Devil's Mother. When about a third of the way, the road skirts the deep hollows of an indented gulf, Ballynakill Harbour. In front of it a number of tiny islands lying upon the surface of the Atlantic shut out a view of the open sea. The landscape is everywhere lonely and uninhabited; a vision of Ireland outside of time and history. For the moment I seemed to see her as she appeared to the adventurers of other days, the legendary invaders, the conquerors of the Middle Ages, Partholan's Scythians, the Nemedians, Firbolgs and Danaans, Milesians, Danes, and the Anglo-Normans of Strongbow. Sky, sea, and cliffs, the moors and the mountains, made up a picture more old than history, and more enduring.

The same landscape, a little farther inland, became condensed and accentuated. It held the eye instead of suggesting endless perspectives beyond. More fertile, it added the grace of a sombre vegetation to the naked beauty of its

lines. Such is the hidden valley of Glengariff, so wild and yet so peaceful looking, where the halt of a day is far too brief to satisfy. Behind the bay, a group of mountains whose summits intercross each other forms a vision the eye can at once seize in its entirety. The lower slopes are covered with vegetation—trees and shrubs, yew trees and hollies, arbutus and fuchsias. Little islands reflect the living charm of their woods upon the face of the indifferent waters. In the coppices are narrow pathways, fragrant with moss, wayward with rocks, and gay with noise of gurgling waterfalls.

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Glengariff is but the rough outline, a little crude and a little rough, of that exquisite marvel —the lakes of Killarney. Here seem gathered together, in a wonderful richness of beauty, all that makes perfect the combination, of mountains, islands, trees and water. And to see it to perfection one should come upon it suddenly, when at a turn of the road from Kenmare all its romantic loveliness springs before one's eyes; first the valley of Gearhameen and the Upper Lake, and then the great block of the Reeks; and in the distance, as far as the eye can see,

the water of two huge lakes, with little basket-like islands. The sight is as a miracle from heaven. All the guide-books say so, all the tourists swear it, and from my own experience I have not the smallest difficulty in believing the statement. Unfortunately this was a view I missed. We had started early in the morning from Glengariff, driving, in spite of the rain, in open char-a-bancs. For four hours it poured in torrents, penetrating waterproofs, soaking the macintosh coverings, drowning the seats themselves, and greater, and indeed only irreparable, disaster, drowning the landscape too.

At Kenmare I gave up driving and went by train, and my first lamentable impression of Killarney was the muddy, dirty streets of the town itself. By four o'clock the weather seemed slightly improved, the rain had ceased, and I hastily drove through the woods and round the lakes; the waters of the latter being as dark and troubled as a sea. We reached the "meeting of the waters,"—but what a little thing this famous spot really is. Three divergent lines, the mouldering arch of an ancient bridge, and a sense of green trees just then drenched

with rain. This was not what I had imagined Killarney. And yet I felt no disappointment. The impression was full of gentleness and imaginative appeal, while the nearness of beautiful scenery, of which one saw, as it were, already the forerunners, touched it with a reflected poetry.

The wind had now risen, a black cloud gathering above the bridge built by the ancient Danes began to fill the sky, and the rain commenced to fall again. The man put in his horse, and we started on a wild gallop to the tune of wind and rain. The latter was like a challenge to us in speed. As we went along the road, which was not unlike a switchback, the little jaunting-car rose and fell as if the impetus of its descent down one incline drove it up the hill opposite. The waters of the lake, as we caught a glimpse of them at intervals, were dark and troubled looking. Presently we passed through some woods. The leaves were dripping,—the leaves of a winter garden, the vegetation, indeed, of a garden in the tropics,—magnolias, cactus, great branching ferns, brakes of bamboos, mingled with different kinds of trees, and the *Arbutus unedo*, which with its fantastic weird-

ness of look, its twisted trunk and gnarled stems, is the pride of the park of Killarney.

When, as the night drew on, we returned to the town by a straight road, reminding one, as it ran between two moss-covered walls, of the drive of some old French castle, the wind had once more fallen, the rain had ceased, and great clouds were chasing each other across the sky.

The next day there was sunshine, and the lakes were transfigured. Boats were waiting at the western end of the upper lake, the smallest, and perhaps the prettiest, of the three, with its wayward-looking shores cut into little bays, its eight islands like nothing so much as eight little green baskets resting upon the water, and with the green slopes of the mountains which dominate it on every side running sheer to the water's edge. It has in fact almost too many lovelinesses—all equally arresting. One follows the curves of the bays, the shadows under the branching ferns of the islands, the tremulous motion of the water along the banks, and the imperious lines of the mountains above. One forgets the simplicity of the lake itself in the graciousness that enfolds it. Along the winding

stream called Long Range, the boats, having first shot under the old Weir Bridge, the rapids called "the meeting of the waters," passed into the middle or Muckross Lake. This is the most charming and the most human of the three. Small enough to be encompassed in one glance, and yet large enough to give an impression of placid amplitude, it is, with its wooded shores, and three little islands modestly ranged quite close to the land, the very picture of richness, serenity, and joy. Nothing withdraws one's eyes from its supreme persuasiveness. It is the spirit of peace in the sublime. One glides over the calm waters without curiosity, without fatigue, conscious only of delight and quietude. Having made the round of this enchanted spot, the boats pass under the arches of Brickeen Bridge into the big lake, Lough Leane. From its extent, from the magnificent effect of its fern-covered shores, and from the beautiful luminosity of its silent waters with their little oases of green, the latter compels admiration, but does not warm one to any sense of closeness or sympathy. The shores are monotonous, on three sides being as smooth as the surface of the water itself. Nevertheless the tranquillity

of the infinite seems to rest upon the place. Thirty little islands of different sizes spring up against the double clarity of lake and sky; a few ruins dotted here and there recall the feudal and religious history of the past; while the silhouettes of some big hotels, drawn there by the sheer beauty of the spot, express the living vitality of the present. Our journey over, the boatman landed us at the foot of an old ruin, Ross Castle, whose ivy-covered walls still rise, as if both to guard the bay and to bear witness to the fact that the scourge of an alien people had long ago already marked this chosen land for its own. It is now in the possession of the wealthy brewer, Guinness, recently created Lord Ardilaun.

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As for Killarney, it is just a magic garden sprung up in the arid wildness of Kerry. Less than a mile away, behind the mountains which overhang the lake, and in front of the chain of the Reeks, the gap of Dunloe stretches between two bare hills. A river, which no green neighbours, follows its winding ways. Here and there it swells into a little motionless and lonely lake. Near at hand there is nothing to be seen but the

sombre and rocky ravine. In the distance, the hills are brown, and broken by the gleam of wet and shining boulders. At closer range they look grey, and as if striped with the fragments of rocks which lie hurled about the heather and mountain grass. We have reached the sad Ireland —the beginning of the Ireland of the West.

In this part of County Galway, where the old names are still retained, there are miles and miles of uncultivated land, such as Iar-Connaught, Connemara, and Joyce's Country. It appears as if dreary moors and lonely mountains would stretch to the end of the world. A swamp follows upon a moor, a lough follows upon a swamp. Iar-Connaught is literally covered with little lakes, the map in Murray's Guide showing as many as fifty between Lough Corrib and the bay of Galway and Kilkieran. Sometimes, in more hilly districts, heather gives way to a coarse grass, whose soft and vivid green dries a faded gold colour. Then comes another rocky-looking plain, then another lough. Subsequently the train runs into a group of hills, in the foreground of which a large cone, half hidden by clouds, detaches itself. Approached from a different point, the mountains rise on either side

of one, when neither their shapes nor their colours are visible. But the loneliness of the scene remains the same—not a tree, not the least sign of cultivation is to be seen. One's eyes lose themselves in a desolate waste of brown, red, and grey earth, over which the great shadows of the mountains brood perpetually.

We skirted in this fashion the southern side of the two hills, Maamturk and the Twelve Pins, arriving finally at Clifden, where a coach, whose route circled the hills, took us to Westport. This meant a drive of five hours through the waste-lands of Connemara, where nothing is to be seen but the barren slopes of the mountains and the inequalities of their summits, between which, when there happens to be no water, great mysterious abysses seemed to yawn. Here and there at the heart of a valley lay the sleeping waters of a lake; here and there, as we neared the coast, came a glimpse of the shining surface of a bay. Now and again also, as the one touch of gaiety in these sterile and abandoned places, hedges of crimson fuchsias gave the road temporarily the look of some garden pathway.

But at last we came to a fiord in the true sense of the word—the Bay of Killarey, which for

nine miles stretches between the mountains on either side, and with its perpetual windings, looks from the distance actually to make the mountains touch in places. Presently our road ran between the water on the one hand and the hills, rising like ramparts, on the other. Across the lake itself stood the imposing heights of Mweelrea, "the giant of the West," and his neighbour Bengorm, who, shutting out the horizon, also shields the bay from the fury of the north wind. And truly it would be difficult to recognise the stormy waters of the Atlantic in the placid surface of Killarey. What would the scene have been like in sunshine? We had started from Clifden in fine weather. But gradually as we approached, it had grown darker and darker, and we found the bay hidden behind a fine dense rain that drowned, with an equal indifference, both tourist and landscape. The stop at Leenane was peculiarly welcome, and the solitary hotel, with its balcony running round the ground floor, took on the air of a friendly shelter deliberately set at the foot of the heights,—by contrast with which it seemed infinitesimal as humanity itself.

The next morning, the weather being still

uncertain, one saw the vista of mountains, clouds, and still water under the dreariness of a grey sky. We drove round the fiord, and over the little bridge thrown across the Erriff. We then skirted the other side, passing by the foot of Bengorm. With the grace of a few new variations, it was the scene of the day before repeated, —bare slopes, sad-looking peaks, rocky moors, seen in the wonderful freshness and clarity that early morning gives to lake scenery. The road then ran along by a little brook, passing a number of small loughs on its way. Presently, leaving the mountains behind, we got to the moors again, bare, but always undulating. The sky became greyer, and mists gathered in the dark mysterious hollows dimly seen between the heights of the distant mountains. The wind scattered like silver dust the waters thrown up beneath it into miniature geysers. Shortly afterwards the rain commenced, not fine and slow like the day before, and reminding one of fine ash, or of a seething gas that every opposing breath tears apart, but so violent, and coming with such tremendous impetus, that one's face was stung with its icy onslaught.

Of Irish rain it can very seldom be said that

it merely falls. To speak of it fitly one would need as many words as it has caprices. Sometimes it travels along the air, journeying in great moving masses, dragging long trails of vapour across space. Sometimes, as at Killarney, it does battle with the wind, hurled, excited, rapid. Once, quite simply, it fell in torrents. It was as if a reservoir had burst, or a pocket split open, or a barrel had been stove in. It was difficult to open an umbrella, and once open it poured forth small torrents from every rib. The best of waterproofs soaked through like linen. This day of floods had nevertheless its comic incident. A fat gentleman, covered in oilskins from head to foot, and placidly secure in his new and bright yellow garments, which made him look like a Newfoundland fisherman, had gazed at us with round contented eyes behind a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles. But presently, having to remove his drenched headgear, and to dry his dripping beard, he remarked with some discomfiture, " I'm not very bad, but I'm not quite comfortable." Clearly, after so great a disillusionment, there was nothing left for him but to take to a diving suit.

To-day it is another kind of rain, it streaks the air in hard lines, and beats against the face like a scourge of pearls. When it is possible to open the eyes it blinds, I see the same stretch of country as before, cold, arid, and uninhabited. After the big village of Louisburgh we keep along the southern side of Clew Bay, seen by glimpses only as a huge slate-coloured sea, whose innumerable islands, covered only with grass, are like flower-beds without flowers. The breath of the sea is now quite close, and the rain has the heaviness of a seaside storm. To the right, bleak hills, dominated by Croagh Patrick, express for the last time before our arrival at Westport, the monotony, the bleakness, and the stern solitude of the mountain country.

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The appearance of these mountain stretches gradually flattens out, until they merge into the moors which cover so large a surface of the interior. One gets a better idea of them looking across the Isle of Achill from the top of Slievemore. From here one sees a continuous unfolding of sullen moorland, broken only in the hollows of the valleys by plots of cultivated land. Again and again I went by train through

similar waste places, but never, as here, have I seen quite such vast desolation, or moorlands quite so unredeemed by any other features. Its absolute bareness is better shown in Achill than in any other place.

Nevertheless the scenery is not always the same; sometimes it is dried up, grey, and streaked with boulders; sometimes, on the contrary, it is marshy, blackish, and cut into slabs by the removal of the peat.

In County Clare, between Ennis and Ennistimon, I saw, close to Corrofin, literal fields of stones. From the distance they conveyed the effect of a town whose houses, huddled together, were nothing but so many grey patches. As the train drew nearer they looked like a cemetery. Nearer they seemed like masses of a solidified lava. Here and there pools of water, like miniature lakes, shone in the dismal landscape.

But the great feature of Irish scenery, at least in its central plains, is the peat bog. One is literally haunted by these great spaces, where the spongy, broken ground hides depths of slow decomposition,—a mass of sodden earth where prehistoric animal and vegetable matter has decayed together. It occupies the beds of

former lakes or sunken forests. Sometimes its elastic surface will stand the weight of a human body, and sometimes one's foot sinks into muddy pools and rush-covered morasses. Here and there are the oblique lines of a peat cutting, while close to the open trench small square blocks of peat are stacked to dry, awaiting the autumn and winter days when they will lie and smoke under some cottage chimney.

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All these impressions of Ireland, seen either at leisure or glimpsed at by the way, remain dominated by the recollection of precipitous shores, of endless cliffs serrated by deep inlets and outstanding islets, of wild-looking capes like the prow of ships, and mountains sloping sharply to the sea. It is certainly a beautiful island, and its proud coastline, whether rising like a defence or bristling like a rampart, seems as if withdrawn from the vicissitudes of history to remain eternally above the music of the waves and sea.

One fine evening, I saw along the coast of Clare, the cliffs of Moher, and in spite of the description of the guide-book, preparing me for a storm, I missed neither the display of colossal

waves nor the effect of the thrown-off spray. The Atlantic lay gentle as a lake. It merely rustled like a piece of silk, and its glistening folds passed from silver into pale-blue. The sinking sun gilded the sky. In the immensity and silence, and before a sea on which not a sail was visible, came a sensation of peace, infinitude, and greatness. I followed the edge of the cliff along the little wall erected through the forethought of some O'Brien for the security of tourists. Below the receding tide slipped caressingly between the sides of the projecting rocks. On the right and left the perpendicular surface of the cliffs shone in the sun's declining rays. Almost black, they were so shaped as to look here and there as if they formed great closed portals, or portals opening out into strange and gloomy caverns. Far away, towards the north-west, vaguely discerned through the mist, was the bay of Galway, and Iar-Connaught. As the twilight deepened all this slowly faded, and the distance became invisible.

A slave often in revolt, who has left everywhere the mark of its passions; but above all a skilful workman, this ocean whose labours have worked for ages to beautify the northern

and western coasts of Ireland, and has made them indeed a wonder and a joy. But to realise this one must have seen the jagged capes, like fragments thrown off from the mountains; have entered the huge bays with their litter of little islands, and have walked along the foot of the rocky and precipitous walls. All these shores of Donegal, Mayo, Connemara, Clare, Kerry, form a series of headlines difficult to surpass in rugged grandeur, and quite unequalled anywhere in variety and richness.

I cannot pretend to describe the grandeur of the coast scenery in what is, after all, a very summary sketch of my impressions in Ireland. Yet I cannot think of the relentless battering of the waves upon the rocky shore without a vision of these "Cathedrals" of Achill, carved by the flood-tide out of the cliffs of Minan. You reach them at low water over a stretch of soft damp sand, about two miles in length. In the distance the pillars of these caves look like those of some huge building hewn out of the mountain itself. On coming nearer they form the arches of an immense opening in the cliffs, their quartz-granite surface shining like marble through the constant dropping of the

water. The gloom inside has the chill of an old church, and once back upon the beach the wind strikes warm by contrast with the damp, dark walls. In front as one comes out, outlined against the solid rock, is a pointed arch, resting on one side against the mass of the cliff and on the other against a crooked, overhanging pillar. Through this arch, filled by the blue of the sky, one seems to gaze upon infinitude. Farther on is the entrance to another gloomy cave . . . and always above this juggling of rock and sea the cliff seems to defy the tide to rise a fraction higher.

It has triumphed in the North on the coasts of Antrim, where the chalky cliffs which lend themselves to the architectural play of the sea have been easily carved out into arches, scooped into caves, and carved into colossal headlands.

But it is at the edge of the basaltic lava, near the Giant's Causeway, that one should above all view the sea of Ireland, dashing with gigantic fury against the great columnar walls, or, weary of its labours, falling back again, content and vanquished, only to regather its forces in the stillness of an ephemeral rest. It is there essentially that one should see the rocks, capes, green

masses and streaked cliffs, which in sunshine and mist equally make magic of the shore. A sight like this belittles all other impressions. After it, how did the Causeway itself appeal to me? The primary sensation was the disappointment reserved for every traveller who first sets foot upon this pathway of volcanic lava,—a pathway, to begin with, inordinately magnified both by the photographs and by the descriptions of the guide-books, and secondly dishonoured by a commercial enterprise that is nothing else than an insult offered to nature. The Giant's Causeway is enclosed by a railing, with a turnstile at the entrance, and a charge of sixpence a head. A persistent guide stopped me ten times at least before examples of perfect polygons, not only showing me their many sides, but counting them —one, two, three, four, five, six. I had to contemplate a lozenge-shaped pool of water and listen to a story about it. I had to sit in the "Wishing Chair," a natural seat formed by the symmetrical arrangement of blocks of lava, and where one has only to express a wish to have it granted. What marvel would look its best seen under such conditions? And the Causeway is not really wonderful at all. Let us return

to the foreground, and to the rocky whirlpools where the water boils like a thing maddened at not finding an entrance into the caves, and throws up against the walls that deny it thick clouds of woolly foam. Or, on the other hand, let us go beyond, to the island rock Carrick-a-Rede, joined to the mainland by a rope bridge which swings eighty feet above the gulf below. Here the shore stretches forward like so many promontories with green edges. Opposite, the Isle of Rathlin bends in the mist the elbow that has justly been compared to a stocking knitted by the women of Ireland. Farther on, at the edge of the horizon, guessed at rather than seen, are the outlines of Scotland. . . . This setting preludes, frames, and enlarges a causeway whose supernatural grandeur has raised the legend of unearthly workmen. The wonderful pavement, the Loom rising against the rock, the great pipes of the Organ, the Amphitheatre, and the Chimney, whose isolated columns rest upon a great bed cut out from the face of the cliff, are all equally attributed to them. But even the work of the Formorian Giants pales before the wonderful structure of rising terraces, in whose formation only time and the forces of

nature could have combined. Here the mind seems to follow the steps of a cosmogony actually made visible to the eye. Lias, basalt, diorite, and ochre beds lie in layers of varying colour, combining the secrets of science with the beauty of nature. Here and there among the stratifications of reddish-brown lava, moss, lichens, grass, and flowers spring up as if to add a final loveliness to this amazing scene of mineral triumph.

But mists were gathering upon the water, and clouds were rapidly spreading over the sky. By the time I got back to the Causeway itself large drops of rain were already forming circles upon its lava surface. We had to make a rush for the hotel, and it was under a violent and heavy Irish rain that I last saw, hardly visible, and yet beautiful as a phantom scene, the rugged coast of Antrim, drowned in the same blinding downpour as sea and sky.

CHAPTER II

The Towns

In his effort to embellish nature man's activity has never ceased to build up and to destroy. The drama of the past in Ireland, seen before we have had time to decipher it in the pages of history, shows only its chief and vital incidents, permanent as things carved out in stone. Towns image the destiny of a people. As the footsteps of history lie, as it were, imprinted upon the soil, to show the traces of bygone generations, so their present aspect reveals as in a mirror the soul, the habits, and the aspirations of the existing population. Recalling my memories of the towns of Ireland, I propose to try and give the impressions they made upon me, without, however, attempting anything like detailed description. Dublin differs very little from an English city. The capital for

more than seven centuries of a kingdom without a king, it has acquired the importance of a big town in England without being able to equal it either in wealth or activity. The shadow of the grim castle, where since 1565 the Lord-Lieutenants sigh, it is said, for the expiration of their vice-royalty, stretches over the city, and intensifies the dull and frigid character of its official dignity. There are too many colonnades and porticoes, too many pediments and domes, and too much of the pseudo-Greek architecture of the eighteenth century in the various buildings,—Trinity College, the Parliament House (now the Bank of Ireland), the Custom House, the Post Office, the Law Courts, and the Royal Academy. There are too many statues also, set in the middle of too many tramways; as, for instance, in Sackville Street, the pride of Dublin. Yes, too many figures of every dimension, carved in every kind of material, and presented in every kind of costume; from Nelson on his Column, and O'Connell on his pedestal, down to the humble bust of Father Mathew himself, the famous "apostle of temperance." Led by the guide-book, you find all along the old and forbidding streets the houses

of a bygone aristocracy, former peers of Parliament. These houses are now for the most part divided up into small sets of lodgings, and it is difficult to recognise them under their present miserable aspect. In some of the more well-to-do quarters, like Stephen's Green, rows of middle-class houses are ranged in front of the railings set round the green and park-like square. Here one might equally well be in London.

But the quays of the Liffey are more gloomy and less bustling than those of the Thames, while there is none of the cheerful hum which gives a port in France the jolly look of a dock-yard. Here one feels rather the depression of a wharf; while the dust which rises in great eddies is as hurtful to the eyes as the hoarse note of the siren is offensive to the ears. This capital of an uncrowned and conquered kingdom, as well as of a nation made up of antagonistic elements, remains a great provincial town, rather impressive and rather gloomy, but unable either to hold the glory of its past like Edinburgh, or to acquire a momentous present like Liverpool.

Is it the failure of a soul unable to forget the weight of an oppressive tyranny? Under

its hybrid and incongruous appearance, due to the borrowed splendour that further discomforts it, Dublin gave me from the first the impression of a crushed and conquered country. One takes in at a glance signs of a military occupation, badly concealed by the outward gear of policemen. The Royal Irish Constabulary are police only in appearance. They are in reality a branch of the army, and something more. They act both as soldiers patrolling the country and policemen to protect it. They are to be found everywhere. The first thing you see, in fact, at the station, or in getting out of the train, are the constabulary, as tall, but slimmer than the English policemen, and of course much smarter in their simple dark uniforms, of which the only noticeable thing is the red-and-silver harp of Erin at the edge of the collar and in the front of the helmet. You find them again in the waiting-room, standing near the booking-office, and at the gates as you pass out. They tramp up and down all the principal roads, going in and out among the cabs and jaunting-cars. You see them walking along the streets, or standing motionless in the middle of the road or on the edges of the pavement, invariably calm,

obliging, and attentive; the real guardians of the public peace, which England's distrust has imposed upon her disorderly sister, Ireland. By the side of these solemn and imposing figures the smallness of the soldiers—absurdly young, spruce, and useless looking—make a poor show. Smartly dressed in tight-fitting uniforms, the infantry in red, and the cavalry in black with a yellow stripe down the trousers, and with spurs at the back of very swagger boots, they all carry a small cane either in their hands or tucked under one arm, and have a cigarette between their lips or a cigar between their fingers. The oldest looks about eighteen, and the youngest fourteen or fifteen years old.

I imagined at first there was a military school at Dublin, or an institute for the sons of soldiers. But, puzzled by their number, I finally asked the question. "It is the English army," said a well-known Dublin man, not without a touch of irony. He then drew my attention to the placards posted on the walls outside the police stations, and on the columns of various porticoes. "Recruits wanted for all branches of His Majesty's service. Enlistments can be made at any police station. God save the King." A

second poster, with coloured illustrations of the various uniforms, and an account of the advantages of a military career, usually accompanies the first. Not but that the best example of these advantages is to be found in the smart youngsters themselves, who with their happy, healthy faces pass and re-pass like so many living and intentional advertisements. As for men, the only real ones visible seem to be the rugged Highlanders, stepping as if in time to the rhythmic swing of the kilt against their knees.

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There is every reason to hope that the future, happier than the past, will never bring this army to grips again with the Irish people. At the moment it seems at least in high favour with the women. All the evening little groups gather together in Sackville Street, and there are interminable conversations under the gas-lamps, against the shop fronts, or during leisurely strolls along the streets. The shops shut at six, and the restaurants (if one can give that name to the D.B.C., XL. Cafés, Empire, and other establishments as indefinite as their names are cabalistic) are seldom open much later.

This evening dawdle in the streets is the

happy moment of the Irish day. Except the better class of Stephen's Green and Merrion Square, the whole town is out of doors. Entire families stroll slowly along, eking out the pleasantness of these idle hours. Younger people, with a more free-and-easy gait, talk, laugh, and smoke. Girls from the shops and factories usually walk arm-in-arm with a friend. The uniforms of the soldiers brighten the scene, and the chaffing encounter of girls and "Tommies" adds to the general cheerfulness. Bare-footed youngsters harry one to buy the latest editions, and groups of poor women sitting against a wall wait for the papers thrown away by hasty readers. From all this animation, lit by gas-lamps and stars, there rises a perpetual murmur of talk, laughter, and footsteps. But for the absence of music and street dancing, one might be watching a 14th of July in some provincial town of France. How many times have I not drawn up the blind of my hotel window to watch the crowds that thronged the streets until eleven or twelve o'clock at night in the various small towns at which I stayed. It was always the same—harmless streams of idlers, glad to let the idleness of the day drift into the still

more genial idleness of an evening out of doors. . . .

For life is an easy business in all these small towns of Ireland—towns with little commerce and little labour, but also with very few exactions. The term given by a humorous guide-book to a particular corner of the West applies equally to the whole country—" the land of the afternoon." I never saw a shop in Ireland opened before nine or ten in the morning, and even then it was only for purposes of sweeping and preparation. Between every stroke of the broom men and women would stand idle in the doorway. Window dressing was an equally languid proceeding, and intervals for rest were incessant. According to one of their own sayings, " When one Irishman works there are always seven looking on."

Truly, this is the land of leisure, where time is of little value, or, for that matter, so completely do they ignore it, of no value at all. You are quite naturally left waiting ten minutes in a shop, nobody taking the least notice of you, because another person is choosing a picture postcard.

To a stranger such a state of affairs is disconcerting, but the candour that accompanies

it is absolutely disarming. In addition, the easiness of the Irish temper is a charm that results in every kind of indulgence. They are a people who both desire to live and to let live, and who exhale gaiety, carelessness, and hospitality. Idleness they love, and their days are one long idleness. Having ample time to interest themselves in strangers, it is a positive charity to give them the chance of doing so. In any case, they are always ready to take it when it comes, just as they are always ready to accept any piece of good luck that drifts their way. Their manners have never been stiffened by a painful laboriousness, and they possess a certain ease and freedom of bearing that seems like some inherent nobility of blood left by their aristocratic Celtic forefathers. Everywhere you find them equally attentive and warm-hearted, your pleasure being invariably their pleasure also.

Not without thinking of themselves too, perhaps. This may be so, but the genuine desire to please is a quality more necessary to social life than one might be tempted to imagine, judging from the degenerate and aggressive form too often made use of by women solely as a means of warfare, and simply in order to conceal weak-

nesses and cunning. Naturally you find it in Irish women also, but with them it is not in its true sense coquetry. The word implies too much subtlety and manœuvring.

The Irish woman is both more spontaneous and more simple. She is pretty, partly through her vivacity, so striking after British stiffness; partly through her hair, usually brown or auburn; and partly through her eyes, singularly smiling and innocent in the darkness of their outer rim. They are disconcerting eyes, set in the face, according to the bold utterance of some poet, by an angel with smutty fingers. While English women love dress, contrivance, and matters of household decoration, the Irish woman has the passion of a child for jewellery. In no other country have I seen such a profusion of false ornaments of apparel. Both in the trains and on the lake steamers it is rare to see a woman not wearing a heavy necklace, a chain set with some sort of stones, and a quantity of bracelets. Children of twelve years old have their wrists covered in bangles, each in their turn weighted with charms; they ring like bells with every movement of their juvenile arms.

In this country, with its uncertain climate,

where wind and rain act as constant wet blankets, you see nothing but feathered hats, light-coloured dresses, and open-work stockings. Never anything thick or serviceable. The tailor-made gown, so fashionable in England, appears unknown in Ireland. I cannot remember ever seeing an Irish girl travel in anything but a bright-coloured silk blouse, thin low-cut shoes, bare neck, and a large hat she grasps with a mittened hand at every gust of wind. In this costume she walks along muddy roads, faces constant showers, rides in tramcars where every umbrella drips, and sits waiting on the seats of the railway stations, always fresh, always wet, and always smiling.

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This lightness of outlook, and this adaptability of temperament, though it constitutes much of the charm of Ireland, slips very easily into idleness and improvidence. The first arrival in an Irish town is always a surprise for the traveller. Apparently all the able-bodied men of the place have been mobilised and posted along the walls to see him pass. I had been three days in Ireland, and had reached Drogheda the first time that I noticed this extraordinary

sight. A dozen men, in the prime of life, with their hands in their pockets, leant against the wall of the National Bank as if waiting for some incident. They did not look miserable, but their clothes were neither those of a labourer nor of a man of the middle-classes—they seemed to suggest some intermediate condition. More of them were up against the wall farther on; others strolled through the streets. They form, in fact, a well-known social group, known by the expressive term of "corner boys." I have seen them come dawdling at nine o'clock in the morning, and take up their position for the day. If you ask an Irishman he will tell you that they do nothing because there is nothing for them to do. I think there is some point in this statement, but at the moment I am trying to give a general impression of the towns and not to discuss the secret of their condition. All I can say is that I found these "corner boys" everywhere, in industrious Belfast as much as in stagnant Drogheda, at Cork and Galway, at Londonderry quite as abundantly as at Westport. They are, be it said, very harmless and very honest, and I do not know that they ever abandon the quietude of their lives to launch in the

dangerous activities of our Parisian *rôdeurs*. The " corner boys " do no harm ; they do nothing.

Unfortunately it is just the same with the women, and if their indolence is partly the result of their wretchedness, there is no denying that it also aggravates it. Their homes are neglected, their children are brought up in the utmost filthiness. They themselves dress in rags never touched by soap or needle. I do not think any other country in the world could show such a sight within a stone's throw of its well-to-do quarters, and under the very shadow of the great achievements of civilisation. In these poorer districts a whole population, stationary and idle, putrifies like stagnant water. Nothing is sadder than to walk along the narrow streets of Cork, behind the Catholic Cathedral, Fort Elizabeth, the Protestant Cathedral, and the Palace of the Anglican Bishop ; or in Limerick along the two older parts of the town called the English and Irish towns respectively ; or in Dublin along St. Patrick Street to the beggars' headquarters, which is like a town set within another. The last sight would undoubtedly be picturesque if it were not also so pitiful. A regular market is held there, and all along the pavement potatoes

lie side by side with barrels of herrings, while in the covered stalls old clothes keep company with lard and pots of treacle.

Everywhere are dark and damp-looking bars for the sale of stout and whiskey, while the place is filled with an unending procession of poor women wearing the usual tartan shawl as head-dress. Everything seems as if gathered together to give the complete picture of a misery so great that its victims, like slaves deadened by servitude, finally sink too low even to struggle against it.

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This is, of course, the last extremity of the indifference to which a people of keen imagination and of a bright and lively temperament are liable. It is possible only to a nation who, so long as its ideals are left untouched, easily surrender any kind of labour or struggle. How powerfully circumstances have helped to drive the Irish along the road of their own tendencies one can see for oneself without the need of any reference to past history,—the evidence of conquest is everywhere, burdensome and disheartening. There is hardly a town where some battered wall, some broken gateway, some ruined fortress does not bear witness to the Anglo-

Norman Conquest. Here and there a castle still stands complete, more or less badly restored and converted into barracks. King John's Castle, which still seems to defend Thomond Bridge, is now used, for instance, as the garrison quarters of Limerick. In Drogheda nothing remains of its former ramparts except two bastioned gateways, fit only to recall the wild onslaught of Cromwell's soldiers, men of accursed and perpetual memory. While the tower of Nenagh, all that is left of the castle of the Butlers, lets its stones gradually fall on to the débris already accumulated at its base.

The most burdensome perhaps of all the buildings which continue to weigh upon the soil of Ireland, are the English churches, which, with their massive square towers cut out like battlements, look for all the world like so many mediæval castles. There they are, peaceful and comfortable enough, these Anglican churches, so long all-powerful in this Catholic country, where, the cause of religion being identical with the cause of nationalism, they stand for so many symbols of the enemy. At first sight one only notices the smaller and more recent ones. For a good many have outwardly nothing to differ-

entiate them from the Catholic churches, since before establishing itself in buildings of its own, Protestantism, as the official creed, drove out the older worship and took possession of its houses. All the Gothic churches, all the venerable cathedrals of the Middle Ages, shelter to-day, in the mystic gloom of their pillars, arches, and vaulted roof, the bare altar and the gilt lectern of the English Protestant service.

Occasionally some nobleman's generosity has paid the expenses of a religion imported by his own race, which he wishes to honour. An example of this is the church of Westport, built by Lord Sligo, partly of stone and partly of marble, and set, like a jewel in a clasp, just within the entrance to his park. On the Sunday evening when I answered the call of its deep-sounding bells I found everything inside of the utmost warmth and cheerfulness. The lamps showed luxurious decorations, soft carpets, hangings of red silk, frescoes from Bible scenes, wrought-iron work and glittering candelabra. Only a few faithful were present, a little selection of rich people dotted about the high-backed pews. In the first row sat a distinguished-looking man, with some youths in irreproachable English

clothes, and several tall girls in pretty blouses, with their hair hanging down their backs. A clergyman in a white surplice, so white and so clean the starch was still stiff in it, read a long philosophically-theological sermon. With his hands resting on the velvet ledge of a low pulpit, he delivered, in the heavy rhythm of the English language, some fine but unimpassioned prose. I had before me a perfect type of the educated, serious, respectable Protestant clergyman. After his sermon he gave out the number of a hymn, and the men's and women's voices, joining together, made a very effective and solemn choir. The twenty or thirty members of the congregation—I imagine all the Anglican population of the town—then passed out with that air of dignity and peace which any regular observance of religious practice seems to give.

Back in the cold and rain outside the recollection of another service rose to my mind, suggested no doubt by contrast.

That same morning, in the island of Achill, I had gone into the bleak and bare-looking building where the peasants were waiting for Mass. This huge, barn-like interior, destitute

of decorations, had no other pretensions but to shelter the altar, the priest, and the congregation ; the latter was so large that I was never able to get much farther than the door. The women, in their best skirts and shawls, but with bare feet, knelt upon the stone floor. The men stood with their arms crossed, or leant on one knee, and the humble devotion that permeated the building was all the more touching for its silence. They had come from every part of the island, some on foot, some on horseback, some crowded together in donkey-carts. All along the roads I had passed picturesque groups of pedestrians, of vehicles, and of riders with wife or child on a crupper behind. They were the poorest of poor Catholic Ireland, and as they knelt the tragedy of their condition came forcibly home to me, these dispossessed and conquered people, still free and proud of soul, and still unquenchably faithful to the spiritual ideals of their forefathers. Where do they hide their money ? For everywhere in Ireland, as if in revenge of a faith long oppressed but never destroyed, and in defiance of the religion of their former conquerors, they, in their turn, have erected everywhere magnificent temples,

whose splendour seems like a song of victory sung above the city. At Queenstown rises a superb new cathedral, which cost twenty years of labour and four million pounds of money. It is built of blue-grey limestone and brilliant red marble. The effect is huge, luminous, triumphant, and serene. The little town of Lismore, spreading so decently round its central fountain at the foot of the avenues leading to the Duke of Devonshire's property, offers the surprise of its cheerful church, which inside is as sumptuous as a Lombard cathedral. The church of Enniskillen, again, in the middle of the principal street, possesses an old Gothic interior. Others less pretentious have been either enlarged or embellished.

The whole life of the town seems sometimes to have gathered itself together in a spiritual outburst, resulting in these flowers springing from the deepest roots of a nation's feelings. For the other buildings have for the most part an air of neglected and taciturn ruin. The shadow of these seems fatal to healthy and strenuous progress. No shops open early. The "corner boys" lie along the pavements, or bask against the sunny walls of a house. Women,

hooded in their shawls, waste hours upon their doorsteps or in the streets. Abandoned factories and ruined, empty houses are all mixed up with the buildings of to-day, just as waste products left in the system block up the circulation of the blood.

The practical side of Ireland, which appears anæmic and ill, goes to sleep until the evening, when its soul leaps into life. Then the streets become animated, and the joy of existence stalks abroad in them. Leisure airs its liberty, and the very soldiers and policemen have only the appearance of idlers, and the light soul of a people which eluded conquest, escaped from its prisons, and evaded all extraneous influences, now intoxicates itself with noise and movement and light.

Nevertheless, she keeps her ideals, her recollections, and her hopefulnesses. She concentrates her energies, and that is why the " Isle of Saints " still flowers like a veritable garden of churches, while its population, incorrigible, ungovernable, and undaunted, carries its dreams through transfused memories of the past, and chimerical anticipations of the future, all the time indifferent to realities of the present, and to the dilapidated conditions which confront them.

CHAPTER III

The Peasants

One has to do violence to oneself, after having travelled through Ireland, not to retain the impression of a neglected and uninhabited country. True, one has passed through some smiling scenery almost recalling visions of France, and one has seen fields and meadows, rows of trees, and outlines of fruitful hills. But too many picturesque views, too many magnificent or tragic scenes have effaced the memory of them. The mind remains under the spell of the latter, and remembers only melancholy valleys, bleak mountains, sheer and jagged coastlines, peat bogs, marshy plains and pasture-land.

Where are the houses, where are the workmen, where is the life of men ? The sense of existence stirs so little the tranquil surface of nature, and makes so little hubbub, that one forgets it.

The peasants' cottages add no gaiety to the dreary moorlands in which they are lost, for nothing moves about them. Dismal as the bogs themselves, silent as the green earth, idle as the eternal apathy of the land, they are totally without the genial activity that ordinarily issues about the homes of country villagers, like the humming of bees in a garden of flowers. Nearly always isolated, or set in groups of twos, or threes, or fours, the Irish huts are seldom brought together so as to form noisy and pleasant little republics, or, in other words, to constitute a village. With their thatched roofs, their low windows cut in little panes, and their doors with an upper panel to let in the light, they leave a curiously melancholy impression upon the mind. None of them have even the fragment of a garden. They are set plump in the fields, or in the moorland, the richer ones flanked by a slate-roofed shed, a luxury of recent years. On the side where the wind is sharpest the roofs are kept firm, sometimes by ropes, and sometimes by wooden supports. As one penetrates into the poorer counties—those of Clare, Galway, Mayo, and Donegal—the general aspect is more miserable still. Damp coats the walls with a

humid moss. The cords stretched across the thatch to keep it in place are simply weighted with heavy stones. In the Isle of Achill the ancient villages of Keem and Dooagh are nothing but a collection of primitive huts, most of them without gables or chimneys. These the guide-books never fail to compare to the wigwams of the Redskins.

Everywhere there are dilapidated walls, roofless hovels, and a general picture of inaction and death, which completes the dreariness of the landscape. There is too little cultivation in this rain-sodden Ireland, and too much pasture-land, where the cattle ensures both its own existence and that of the peasant, who, in consequence, does no work. What the scenery wants is life, the noise of labour, the fullness of harvests, the creaking of loaded waggons, the bustle of farmyards, the silhouette of a field-labourer standing out against the horizon, the ringing of the Angelus, and the beating on the anvil on the forge.

Here the genius of melancholy and silence reigns supreme. I felt myself truly under its influence the evening when, returning from the cliffs of Moher, I crossed—shaken in a jaunting-

car—a grey and sterile country, bristling with stones, and divided up by walls of the same material. The village of Liscannors slept among its blue-grey paving stones, hewn out of its own quarries; the horizon loomed pallid in the twilight, and the falling darkness gave a touch of mystery to the ruins scattered everywhere. It was six o'clock in the month of August, and I could not help thinking of the grace of our own familiar fields, of the serene fecundity of our lowlands, of the gentle aspect of our orchards, seen on summer evenings in the Isle of France, in Normandy, or in Touraine. Great melancholy winds swept across the plains and showed the nearness of the sea. Oh, how sad they seemed to me, these hovels that I caught sight of, scattered here and there in the lonely places of the moor!

Some very poor, others of superior appearance, all, from the tiny house with whitewashed walls, to the *beehive*-like cabins of the Isle of Achill, shelter a peasant race, the purest Irish blood of the island. Is it possible for a mere traveller to get a glimpse into their lives, into their souls? He sees them first in passing. In front of the only cottage in the place, or in the one street formed by a row of cottages, a man is sure to

be lounging with his pipe in his mouth. With shaven chin and upper lip, he wears only close-cut whiskers and a little narrow beard, like our Breton fishermen. His dress and his jovial appearance are similar also, save that our sabots are replaced by heavy shoes. The women, with bare feet and wearing dirty skirts and shawls, also generally stand in their doorways, carrying a child on their arm, while several other ragged-looking boys and girls lean against the wall to watch you pass, unless they run after the carriage with their eternal refrain, "Gi' me a penny, gi' me a penny."

Neither men nor women have much to do. Domestic matters occupy but little time. In a pot, kept perpetually upon the peat fire, the potatoes cook themselves. A teapot stews all day among the burning ashes of the hearth. The bed is made when once the coverlet has been pulled up over the bolster of seaweed and straw. A bin, table, and two benches, blackened with smoke, do not require much attention, and the floor of beaten earth does not lend itself to sweeping. Outside there is not an inch of garden to be cultivated, only pasturage where the cattle thrive independent of help from anyone, or a

field of potatoes of which hardly any notice is taken from the time of planting to the time of digging up. Nothing else is needed to stave off starvation, and to enable them to pay the rent when the land agent becomes troublesome.

In consequence this is sufficient to make an Irishman easy. The falling rain does no harm to his grass; having no crops of a more delicate nature, he faces the bad weather without any other precautions save that of protecting his pipe, the bowl of which has a little lid at the top. He lacks the stamina to struggle against the double tyranny that overwhelms him — nature's inclemency and the despotism of conquest. The first paralyses his efforts and the second discourages them. It is not worth while working the land if all the profit of his crops is to be swallowed up either by the catastrophe of a bad season or the exigencies of a ruinous lease. Between these two threats Paddy has grown to be a philosopher. He only asks to exist, happy when he can warm himself in the sun or cheer himself by a burst of good-humour.

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For the Irish have an incurable need of light and happiness. The damp warmth of the climate

makes them lethargic, and the harshness of their past history depresses their spirit. They seem to make no struggle against this, and are indeed sadly slack in the business incumbent upon every nation of organising its existence. But let the least touch incite them, and something keen and vivid pierces the fog of their depression, and the Irish *humour*, looked upon by the English with an icy smile of contempt, bursts forth in an innocent sort of explosion, which, destroying nothing, lets loose all the surplus animation within. This vitality must find an outlet either in words or actions. Like the inhabitants of the towns, the peasant is expansive, sociable, and talkative. He welcomes every opportunity of meeting his friends. Markets and fairs are interminable, but business, I think, is only a secondary consideration at them. The real necessity for all these people, who live in some poverty-stricken village, or in the solitude of a bog, is that of meeting one another, of loitering in a cheerful crowd, of getting the excitement of noise and movement. There is in this a species of mild intoxication dear to the soul of all warm-hearted races, and more especially to this one, which is warm-

heartedness itself. The Irish indeed love all forms of excitement, the lowest as well as highest. The taste for drink is, unfortunately, very prevalent. If one can judge by the number of dram shops, an unlimited amount of porter, stout, and whiskey must be consumed in Ireland. At the same time I never noticed that drunkenness was worse there than in other parts of the United Kingdom, while it is certainly less in the country than in the towns. The stimulus of tobacco is also much appreciated, and it is one of the curiosities of Ireland to see old women, in dirty woollen skirts and shawls, pulling rather pathetically at the stumpy clay pipes they keep incessantly between their aged teeth.

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But let one stop and speak to them and not a coarse word will pass their lips. To one's surprise, one hears an old-fashioned and aristocratic language, strangely sprinkled with emphatic and picturesque expressions, and interwoven with feelings of respect, piety, and poetry. For the Irish soul is rich in the treasures that are not convertible into current coin, but which give to poverty a singular dignity of manner. Nowhere is there less obsequiousness or less

humility than in Ireland. The lowest farm hand would be quite at his ease with the Viceroy. For respect is not servility. And the Irish respectfulness appears to be the pleasant expression of the love they all bear in their hearts for what appears to them great. It is a homage of the soul by which they become the equal of what they admire. This sort of respect only disappears when envy, hatred, and baseness of spirit take its place—when every ideal, in fact, is dead. And the proud Irishman is the most idealistic creature alive—consequently the most respectful. Everyone takes off his hat to a priest, while the poorest little ragamuffin touches his forehead with his hand. A stranger is ordinarily addressed as "Your Honour," and a lady is almost always spoken to as "My Lady."

The conversation, embellished by these complimentary expressions, is nevertheless absolutely outspoken. If you happen to be a great personage, Paddy will only be the more delighted and at ease with you. He will experience in your presence a sort of plenitude of joy, a feeling corresponding very nearly to our own pleasure at the sight of a masterpiece. One

sees the inner greatness of his soul in this passion for superiority.

The children, in spite of their rags, are delicious, and have fresh-looking faces and bright eyes, which gleam with satisfaction at making themselves useful or in speaking to a stranger—a "gintleman." They are only too anxious to do anything for you, and answer all questions without the least trace of shyness or embarrassment. You arrive in a village, and leave your carriage at a place where you arrange to find it on your return. If, when you do, the driver has disappeared, the children all rush up crying, "I know where the carriage is, sir." I asked one of them in the Isle of Achill if he knew how to write. "Yes, sir." "Will you write your name in my notebook?" "Yes, sir." And the little chap of seven wrote quite clearly, "Michael Gallagher, Ballinock, 1903." I asked him to add the names of the two little fellows with him, and with the same self-possession he added, "Harrel Gallagher, Ballinock; Patrick Gallagher, Ballinock." Then as we passed a small hamlet of several huts, he pointed a brown and very dirty hand to a door opening into a single, smoke-blackened room. "That's my

home," he said simply. I tipped him for his politeness, and the three brothers, agile as goats, bounded towards the *home*, proud of contributing their share of the harvest.

I remember also an old man with a fine head, not unlike that of the proverbial shepherd of a fairy story. His white hair fell in strands from under his wide felt hat, framing a thin face whose clean-shaven mouth smiled a little tremulously. He had no teeth left, and his poor old head shook from time to time. He was in charge of a flock of sheep scattered over the great green moors, which are, as it were, crowned by the ruins of Sir Walter Raleigh's castle.

I had the honour of being the guest of Lord Castletown, and we were exploring the country which surrounds his beautiful seat at Doneraile. A house which he intended showing me was shut up. "Let us go and talk to the shepherd," he said. The man came from Kerry, and did not know the neighbourhood. Lord Castletown gave him a message for his neighbour. "From whom, if you please?" The answer, as if by magic, transfigured the old man. All the Irish love for the old country, all the Irish passion for the past, leapt into the clear eyes, in whose

indefinite colouring the simplicity of childhood still mingled with the melancholy of old age. A gleam of pride and tenderness passed through them. "Oh, my lord," he said; adding immediately, "I know your Irish name well, MacGiolla Phadriag. Do you know, my lord, that you have the oldest name in Ireland?" With an exquisite grace and ease of manner this old Celt found the very thing a sovereign would have said to a great nobleman. He then remained silent, lost in dreams. The shaking head seemed letting loose confused visions of past glory and poetry, the eternal obsession of independent days. Lord Castletown held out his hand, "I am very glad to have met you. The people of Kerry are the best in Ireland." After walking a little way I looked back. The silhouette of the shepherd stood out against the background of ruins. Sturdy in spite of his age, he was, in his patched and muddy clothes, the very picture of old Ireland, worn with long years of unhappy fate and yet stored with inward vitality. He sat down again on the green turf where Sir Walter Raleigh's castle (once burnt down) now crumbles stone by stone, and from his seat he watched the retreating

figure of this peer of the United Kingdom, in whom he had piously recognised the heir of MacGiolla Phadriag, the famous king of Ossory.

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How easily these idealistic people detach themselves from reality? How greatly their life lies in the world of legends and dreams, hopes and remembrances. Their attitude towards death is explained by this. While our sceptics and intellectual savants willingly show a sort of sacred respect to the only Unknown which troubles them, the Irish peasant, familiar all his life with mystery, is, if one can say so, quite at home with the infinite, and is neither troubled or frightened by the last step into the beyond. The essential as far as he is concerned is to do honour to him who has gone, and to soften the sorrow of those who are left. There is, in the noisy agitation of the days before the funeral, something of the same mood in which we treat the drawing by lots and the departure of the conscript. It has taken all the influence of the priesthood to abate the custom of wakes, in which the whole neighbourhood gathered together, and for two nights running sang and got drunk in the room where the body lay exposed upon

the bed. Such a scene, if I had been given an opportunity of seeing it, would have been a fitting pendant to one I came across at Killarney. We had come back about five o'clock from a walk among the lakes, and I was not surprised to find the principal street as animated as on the busiest of fair days. The Irish are so seldom in a hurry that I thought they were merely intending to linger there until nightfall. They all seemed collected into talkative groups. A jumble of jaunting-cars appeared to be waiting until the farmers and their wives were ready to start home again. Some passers-by were gathered round a cartload of flowers drawn up to the edge of the pavement. But instead of a florist, a jolly, apoplectic looking driver was in charge. I saw then that the thing was a jaunting-car like the rest. Suddenly the man mounted, but not on the box-seat, but on to one of the two seats which lie at right angles to it, and which, back to back, form the main part of this extraordinary vehicle. The seat not occupied by him was a mass of flowers. With the reins in one hand, the man fastened up his heavy overcoat, yellowed by age, with the other. His rubicund face, swelled out like a pear under the felt hat

placed on the top of his head. He covered his legs with a rug, and started the car at a walking pace. Instantly a piercing cry was heard. Men and women, especially the latter, jumped on to the other cars, and as the procession passed me I saw the flowers covered a little coffin of varnished wood, fastened by ropes to prevent its being jerked off by the jolting. In this fashion they were taking the poor baby it held to the church and the cemetery. I drew near to the house where a sound of moaning was the only sign of grief in this extraordinary burial. In a very humble-looking shop, with closed shutters but open door, a woman wailed monotonously, a few neighbours joining in, while passers-by gathered about the threshold. No face betrayed either grief or emotion. Everybody seemed to find it a perfectly natural incident that the child should be dead, and the mother fulfilling her last duty towards it in this public lamentation for its departure. . . . The Irish idealism is as much concerned with the *au-delà* as that of his brother the Breton. The folk-lore of Ireland is one of the richest in the world in legends, myths, popular beliefs, traditions, and superstitions of every kind. There are still

many sacred fountains, miraculous caves, and haunted places in Ireland.

This feeling for the supernatural, this perpetual creative activity of the imagination, is the very element out of which poetry is made. The Irish peasant is in fact a poet. He is also a musician. The *Feis* meetings, similar to the Welsh *Eisteddfod*, contests in poetry, music, and singing, always draw enthusiastic audiences. There were eight or nine of them, to my knowledge, during the last half of September, some of them lasting for two days. I had chosen that of Youghal. From an early hour the trains emptied crowds of visitors into the peaceful little town. The meeting, as was usual, was to be held in a field. From eleven o'clock the rain fell with such violence that it became necessary to postpone the meeting. But in the evening a concert was held at the town hall, in which the national instruments, the harp and the bagpipe, were chiefly conspicuous. An exhibition of old war-dances was given, and the huge hall, filled in spite of raised prices, from top to bottom, maintained the same enthusiastic delight from the beginning to the end of a long series of " turns," always the same, and a tenth

part of which would have emptied a house of Frenchmen.

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Curiously detached from the realities of the present, the Irish mind delights in recalling and idealising the past. Under the spell of his own visions, an Irishman hardly thinks of the future as anything but a resurrection of the past. Nothing is more singular in this people, so ill-used by history, than their incapacity to organise their own existence, combined with their persistent refusal to be assimilated by their conquerors. Possibly they might have done much to ameliorate their actual condition had it not been for this fascinated clinging to the mirage of the past. Looked upon not as a doctrine but in the light of popular feeling, Irish nationalism can in fact be largely explained by three causes —sheer physical inertia, the passion for dreams and remembrance, and the possession of a fickle and combative temperament. Add racial antagonism, and no further explanation is necessary.

It is easy to see that such mental conditions cannot have been conducive to the welfare of the country, especially to that of the peasant,

who is its essential element. But in addition every possible misfortune has conspired against the rural population of Ireland. First of all, there was its own increase. In 1845 it had reached to the number of eight millions three thousand, nearly a quarter of the population of France, and this in spite of the fact that the island is only one-sixth of the size of the latter country, and possesses neither its industrial nor agricultural resources. Mountains, lakes, and peat bogs occupy the greater part of it. There is not enough space for everybody—the demand, as economists say, is greater than the supply. Hence the rise of rent, and the parcelling out of farms into infinitesimal portions. Lastly, the landlords—for the most part Englishmen—do not reside in Ireland, and all the rent in consequence is spent out of the country. The case is unique in Europe, another reason why the misfortune of Ireland is almost unique likewise. The ancient and glorious land of Erin is the only country of Europe where famines still continue. Five hundred thousand people perished in that of 1846.

In order to earn a living the peasant emigrates. During the forty years from 1851 to 1891 the

population has dwindled by about four millions. If some of the people from the poorer districts are contented to seek a livelihood in England and Scotland, the bulk of the emigrants go to America. Time after time, in passing by one of the hovels, where whole families somehow exist together, I have thought of the separations which add so much to the sadness of these already dreary households, and which no doubt teach the sweetness of home to hearts stricken at the prospect of a long exile. At Claremorris, a little station in County Mayo, I saw, as I was on my way from Westport to Dublin, a very touching scene of farewell. A group of seven or eight men and women were standing together where they could see the departing train for as long as possible. In the middle stood a fine-looking, but prematurely aged man, probably the father. His lean face, lined by privations and sorrows, was extraordinarily excited, his eyes shone, and, with his sparse, pointed beard, he had the air of a rustic da Vinci. The woman standing by his side seemed to have no age. In the customary shawl which conceals the head, and the coarse cloak which hides the figure, she represented nothing but that enduring, sublime,

impersonal element — motherhood. Both faces were drawn with grief. They held their handkerchiefs ready for a last good-bye, for a final attempt to snatch another second from time, wrested between the past which was over and the future which was yet with the unknown. I leant out of the carriage window to have another look, and saw at the door of a third-class compartment the head of a young girl, contused and swollen-looking with tears, and convulsed with the sobs that shook her. A common anguish wrung them all, and drew them together in the last supreme tie which her departure was finally breaking. The train started; hands and handkerchiefs were waved. Soon after, I could discern nothing but the figure of the man standing upright, stiffened, gazing with a fixed stare, and that of the woman, who seemed suddenly to have become unconscious, crushed under the weight of too much sorrow.

How often must this scene have been repeated, rendered still more tragic when taking place at the very ship's side, on the quays of Dublin or Queenstown. What will become of them, lost in the great industrial towns of the American Republic? Will they pine away, devoured

by a consuming homesickness? . . . The change is much as follows. Away from the soil which blighted it, the healthy plant grows, expands, and makes a place for itself in the sunlight. Unfortunately, every occupation out there is overcrowded, but if Ireland supplies, as she is frequently reproached with doing, too many politicians and too many waiters to the United States, her real contribution to the moral and material greatness of the country ought not to be ignored. The Administration, the Army, Church, University and literary world, have all felt the revivifying influence of the Irish element, leavening the heaviness of the American character. In County Antrim the cottage of President MacKinley's forefathers is still to be seen, a true Irish cabin, poverty-stricken, low-roofed and whitewashed, with its diamond-paned windows, and its door divided horizontally in the middle. A few generations sufficed for the journey from the cabin to the White House. I have often asked myself, when coming across the bright "gossoons" one meets continually upon the roads and in the villages, ready-tongued and eager-eyed, what would become of them later on, when, inured by their hardy childhood

to privations and miseries, hardened also by wind and rain and sun, against which their rags offer no protection, they found themselves flung upon the opulent cities of America. With their magnificent physical strength, their imaginative brains, and their oratorical talents, what would they do, one wondered, suddenly faced by the intricacies of overcrowding and competition? Yet it is the dream of this very competition that drives the Irish peasant to emigrate. It is this which gives courage to those that go, and resignation to those that are left.

Is this outflow good or bad for the country? Ireland's best friends differ with bitterness on the subject. From either point of view it seems to me impossible to deny an immense significance to this Irish influx into America. History certainly has not spoken its last word upon the subject. It is just possible that the destiny of Ireland is no longer entirely to be worked out in the gloomy towns and desolate moors, where her old age has so long languished, and of which the traveller retains so melancholy and wistful an impression.

CHAPTER IV

The Ruins

On the road along which the life of Ireland so slowly drags itself, to-day only passes into to-morrow after leaving part of itself as a dead weight behind. The creative energy, through which alone human nature withstands the disintegrating power of time, is lacking to the Irish. Destruction works at will, unhindered by any opposing efforts. The country is covered with deserted cottages, roofless, and with walls crumbling to pieces. In some cases, even, only the naked walls remain, and these, conveying no hint of their past poverty, have the appearance of fine old ruins. Often a deserted building falls to pieces by the side of one built to replace it. For it is not the custom in Ireland to clear the land of encumbrances. In the towns an abandoned factory crumbles away, stone by

stone, a few yards from the shops in which the small trade of the town is carried on, while in the middle of a street one may come upon the pitiable-looking framework of an empty and windowless dwelling. The rubbish of the past is like an accretion grown upon a present that has so far been unable to learn the secret of healthy development.

This explains, no doubt, the atmosphere of fallen greatness one breathes in everywhere. One seems to be walking in a museum without walls, where the poetry of the past, like ghosts let loose to walk the earth and air, mingle everywhere with the realities of the present. History crops out at every turn. But if the beauty of a ruin is like a jewel to a prosperous and cultivated country, here, among so much visible and widespread misery, these signs of a past greatness seem merely like tombs set in a huge cemetery in which the soul of a nation is buried. Sometimes they intensify the solitude of the moors, as in the case of the square towers, which rise in a hundred places, pierced by little windows, and showing all that is left of the home of some Anglo-Norman chieftain. Sometimes, as in the ramparts of Limerick, or the gates of Drogheda,

they overlook the trivial collection of modern houses gathered below—parasites of their former greatness. Or, as in the cases of Kilkenny and Malahide, they still endure, restored by the posterity of their conquerors to something of their old strength and massiveness. But alone or in company, small or great, they are so numerous and so diverse in style, that the eye, haunted by their multiplicity, thinks it sees them everywhere—in the most insignificant well, in the commonest heap of stones, just as in the realm of illusions one no longer knows where the real ends and the imaginary begins.

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Often one comes first upon an isolated piece of half-broken-up wall, showing nothing to betray its former origin, but which, rising suddenly at the edge of a field or in the middle of a moor, sad and mysterious to see, is the only suggestion of humanity in all the solitude. Then appears a little castle, reduced now to the single tower and the square keep which were generally separated from the rest of the buildings. This picture haunts me still, so often did I see it upon the soil of these counties where sovereignties were parcelled out without limit, and

where every native chieftain fortified himself in such a castle, clan against clan, each equally aggressive by temperament and by necessity.

The evidence of combat is everywhere. It greets one upon the outskirts as well as in the very heart of the straggling villages and towns, through the constant ruins of ramparts that once withstood such furious onslaughts. Drogheda, so charmingly situated on the Boyne, and so delightful to look at from the distance, with its four towers rising above it, would be quite cheerful, if the sadness of its ruins did not make the memory of its past massacres lie like a stupefying weight upon the surface of the present. Of the ten gates, formerly powerless to defend it against Cromwell's soldiers, two are still standing, picturesque but battered—the Western Gate, an octagonal tower pierced by long, narrow loopholes through which one can see the grooves of the portcullis, and the St. Lawrence Gate, consisting of a retiring wall between two high round towers. At Clonmel, Wexford, Athlone, Kilmallock, Athenry, and Waterford, similar remains recall the stormy past of internal dissensions and English conquest, of civil wars and national resistance. In all

these places the impression is the same. It is as if these rough witnesses of an age of steel and bloodshed, in which the very life of the nation was sapped, still keep it dulled and dazed by the influence of their overshadowing and gloomy walls.

Among these ruins those of the invaders can easily be picked out, so invariably superior are they both as to position and massiveness. Frowning and solid, they may almost be said to lay claim to the feudal and military landscape their presence creates. Burnt and rebuilt, captured and retaken, battered by sieges and ravished by decay, they still rear whatever remnants have withstood the power of time—such as the keep, the towers, and the outer gates. King John's Castle, at the head of Thomond Bridge, still commands the approaches to Limerick, while its sixty yards of frontage, extending along the Shannon, is flanked by two solid towers much riddled by the cannon-balls of old encounters. In the street that runs down perpendicularly to the river two crenelated towers protect the old entrance to the city. This little fragment encloses a group of barracks, arranged in terraces, and forms altogether a confused medley, in which the dignity of the

old feudal design still lingers. Another of King John's castles, situated in Trim, the county town of Meath, covers with its splendid ruins a space of some two acres. A huge keep, strengthened by rectangular towers, standing out clear against the sky, has its twenty different walls pierced with narrow loopholes. It was built by Hugh de Lacy in 1173, before re-embarking for England. The captain left in command of it, in order to prevent it falling into the hands of Roderick O'Connor, king of Connaught, deliberately set fire to it. Maynooth, built by Maurice Fitzgerald in 1176, Bunratty, built by Thomas Clare, who received the lands belonging to it from Thomond when King Brian was expelled, Roscommon, built in 1268 by John D'Ufford, all these ruins, enriched by time with a tragic beauty, magnificently express the fate of this violated and tumultuous country, where the past, in common with its crumbling splendours, can never either triumph or expire.

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All these rude fighters of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, whether invaders or the native princes they dethroned, had dreams apart from their daily existence, and raised temples

to them side by side with their heavy fortresses. Churches, monasteries, and abbeys were the joys of this fighting age, which was at one and the same time an age of faith. These religious houses bejewelled the soil which they still continue to idealise. Through them poetry and the infinite wove themselves into the brutal texture of history. Love and sweetness had their shrines as truly as violence and hate—shrines, moreover, marvellously adapted to the spirituality of their intention. The walls were made less thick, and were broken, first by round, then by pointed arches, while their vaults aspired to heaven, supported in their flight by a little mass of slender columns. The tower, no longer condemned to remain heavy and defensive, seemed of its own accord to grow more graceful and more spiritual, as befitted that which should hold above the bustle of the world the music of the holy bells. The Irish churches are in truth the deified residences of a king. Every prince, every lord of that time, desired to give his Heavenly Sovereign a home worthy of His omniscience. We find in the ruins of Athassel Priory the tomb of William de Burgo, who founded it at the end of the twelfth century, as well as

that of one of his descendants, Richard, the Red Count of Ulster, who also died there a century and a half later. Donall O'Brien, king of Thomond, founded in 1182 the Abbey of Holy Cross, meant for the Order of the Cistercians, and destined to receive a piece of the true Cross, which Pope Pascal II. had given to his ancestor. In 1252 Maurice Fitzgerald built Sligo Abbey, which, partially destroyed, was rebuilt—the ruins at the present time being a mixture of Tudor and the period of the Pointed Arch.

But the old native kings had not waited for the Anglo-Norman invasion in order to call in architects and endow religious monuments, inspired as they were by the greatest of all beauties, their own sea-encompassed country. The king of Meath had founded in 1146 Bective Abbey, a mixture of defensive and monastic architecture, while the king of Ossory had erected Jerpoint Abbey, and O'Brian, king of Munster, in 1151 had built the Abbey of Monasteranenagh. Of these only a few ruins remain. Ivy and other creepers have laid siege to their crumbling towers. Slow destruction has both simplified and spiritualised them. Everything which enclosed them has disappeared—roofs, doors, and

stained-glass windows. Bare to the sky and at the mercy of every wind, only the essential portions remain to show the original loveliness of their design, and the marvellous scheme of slender columns, mullioned windows, and pointed arches soaring upward to eternity.

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This bejewelment of abbeys and fortresses, through which the Middle Ages still seem in Ireland to project themselves into the existence of to-day, reaches a climax in the imposing ruins of Cashel. Lifted on their rocky base, high above the realities of the present, they at least completely escape from the shroud which each new day winds ever a little closer about the ruins of the past.

Placed abruptly in the very heart of a fertile plain, Irish imagination has always run riot as to the origin of the Cashel Rock. And truly there has been every justification for doing so. Absolutely astounded, you wonder where this portion of a mountain could possibly have tumbled from. Away on the north-west lies an undulating line of hills, the Silvermine, from the ridge of which a large slice has clearly been hollowed out. From this the following legend has arisen. The Prince

of Darkness was one day prowling about the neighbourhood, and feeling hungry bit a piece out of the hill for supper—called ever since "The Devil's Bit." But the morsel was not to his taste, and turning angrily round, he spat it out furiously and far, with the result that the Cashel Rock fell in the middle of the beautiful "Golden Valley."

It is there that one has to go and find it, set in the really agricultural district of County Tipperary, where the tourist seldom penetrates. The Golden Valley? The very name suggests a sunlit and fertile land, a vision of richness and joy. My Cashel excursion left me with a very different impression. At the little station of Goold's Cross, away from any village, three miserable jaunting-cars were waiting in the mud. I took one of them, and as I was the only passenger the two others returned to a neighbouring inn, the solitary house in the deserted-looking district. Then came an hour and a half's jolting along the rutty roads of an open country, only bordered here and there by the moss-covered walls of some large private estate. The monotony of the scene was relieved at intervals by a few ruins. At various points abandoned lime-kilns seemed

like the remains of some former towers. An enormous blackened frontage, pierced by window-holes, is all that remains of one of the Butler's castles, and I read in my guide-book that it was taken by Cromwell, who also hanged its owner. The coming dusk made everything more melancholy. But in truth at best how lonely and how silent these Irish landscapes are! Here a mauve mist lay like a veil over everything, and in all my drive not one labourer was to be seen at work in the fields. All we met were a few pedestrians, and one or two light traps. At last we came upon the grey outlines of the rock. A little later, and we entered one of the poorest and most desolate of all small Irish towns. It seemed at first deserted. But in the principal street three or four ragged urchins with bare feet watched us pass. The car stopped at the foot of a pathway leading to the ruins, and appeared to deposit one into a town fallen asleep beneath the empty citadel that mounted guard over it. The eye wandered disconsolately over squat houses, miserable-looking little shops, and a few stray figures standing on their doorsteps. The scene was so wholly dull that it seemed to hold neither the charm of life nor the dignity of death.

A steep path cut in steps up the side of the hill led to a fortified gate, through which we reached the ramparts of a chaotic and massive acropolis. Crowded together in one haphazard mass are an old Gothic cathedral, a castle, a chapel, and one of the usual mysterious round towers which are like an archæological *leitmotif* throughout the scenery of Ireland. The ground round about is strewn with tombs, in accordance with the old custom of using all sacred places as cemeteries. A Celtic cross, with the Crucifixion on one side and a figure of St. Patrick on the other, is supported by a pedestal formerly used, it is said, for the crowning of the kings of Munster. More strongly here than in most places one is conscious of the spirit of battle and of prayer which made Ireland the Isle of Saints as well as a thing rent in twain by internal factions and foreign domination.

This rock sums up its history. The very name Cashel — fort — betrays the military intention of its origin. The old kings of Munster had used it from the beginning as a place of safety, then a companion of St. Patrick's founded a church there. Later, a king, Cormac by name, who was also bishop of the place, built the chapel, whose stone roof, arched gateway, and two

romanesque towers prove it to be a very fine example of eleventh-century architecture. Afterwards a cathedral was erected, sheltering the old church in a corner of its choir and transept. This cathedral, built in the thirteenth century, was presently laid waste. In 1495 the famous Gerald, Count of Kildare, burned it down, stating as an excuse for doing so, that he thought the archbishop was inside. In 1647 Lord Inchiquin commanding the parliamentary troops, besieged it, and massacred the unfortunate people who had taken refuge inside. The short nave, the magnificent choir, the transepts, and the square heavy tower, supported by Gothic arches, now rear roofless walls, while more dilapidated still rises the Bishop's Palace, in the angle of the north transept—a palace that was also a fortified keep, several storeys high, but serving at the same time as the residence of the archbishop-king. The round tower, like some tall candle with a snuffer on the top, meanwhile waits—melancholy and mysterious, a pharos without a light, a belfry without a bell—for new generations to guess its secret.

The secret of the past ? To win it from these mute stones, so eloquent in their silence, I would

willingly have lingered on a spot history has handled so roughly. But already the ruins were being hidden by the darkness, which, with the cemetery crouching in their shadow, seemed only to constitute one colossal tomb—the tomb of the strenuous Ireland of the Middle Ages, lying quiet at last in the sleep from which there is no awakening.

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But time is not such a destroyer as man himself. War has caused more ruins than the ages, and while in brisker countries labour produces continual transformations, here life has held no transmuting vicissitudes. The centuries follow and overlap each other, and the last at the best only conceals some few of the ways of the others. The soil of Erin is like a faithful depository in which memories are religiously retained. These memories, like those of individual intelligences, have a simplifying and idealising influence. Before the eleventh century, for instance, we have only one impression of Ireland—that of the "Isle of Saints," with its round towers, Celtic crosses, and stone altars. We can see and guess nothing of the life of its clans and chieftains. Of the old towns, only the mutilated names

remain, while not a vestige is left of the ancient wooden palaces, once so numerous. All that time has bequeathed to represent the age of conversions and enthusiasm, when the earth seemed only a place made to kneel upon, and to cover with monuments reminding men of heaven, are the churches built by the early apostles and their successors, with the cells of anchorites, and the wooden crosses, covered by the primitive but delicate designs of the Celts.

Even to-day, Ireland has still the air of a holy place. The number of its ruins gives to so deserted a country the gloom of an old cemetery. How far we seem in it from the haunts of industry and good harvests! The solitude is merely accentuated by the presence of its tomb-like ruins, and everything appears to have aged without altering for the past million years. The little churches of the ninth century, with their solid stone towers, are still erect — St. Flannan at Killaloe, St. Columba at Kells, St. Kevin at Glendalough. Even the romanesque arch is not yet visible in them, and one must bend low to pass through the old doorways with their oblique doorposts and straight lintels. Neither nave nor choir exists. The oblong

interiors are topped by roofs of semicircular arches, and are dimly lighted by arched triangular windows splaying inwards, placed in the wall opposite to the entrances. Above the nave and under the roof are little crofts, no doubt the cells of old hermits or apostles.

Occasionally—reminding one of the remains of some sacred city consisting only of churches—a number of sanctuaries are crowded together in a particularly selected spot, as in the case of the seven churches of Glendalough and Clonmacnoise. These ruins are, in fact, all that remains of old monastic cities, in which pious princes grouped schools, hospitals, and churches round some revered hermitage, such as that of St. Kevin at Glendalough and St. Kieran at Clonmacnoise. When the ravages of the pagan Danes and Anglo-Norman invaders devastated these sacred enclosures, the men who could no longer live in them yearned at least to rest there after death, and turned them into cemeteries.

Nothing can surpass their present melancholy. One must have seen the valley of Glendalough asleep in the middle of its mountains to realise the full gentleness and silence that Nature can give to a sacred and solitary landscape. The only

thing that corresponds to it at all in France is Port Royal. In both cases the country seems to close jealously about its treasure, but the Jansenist *Thebaïd* lacks the grace of this sacred valley, whose sleep, lightened by two dreaming lakes, is guarded by the usual round tower still standing like an extinguished beacon.

These towers have attracted the curiosity of the erudite quite as much as the eyes of the tourist, and while it is sufficient for the one just to see them set in some of the finest scenery of Ireland, the others are drawn to them as riddles to which an answer has not yet been given. When I got back I read the discussions aroused by them among archæologists; over there I had no other desire but to gaze at them perpetually. A description of them has already been given in reference to the ruins, set as they are among some of the most beautiful relics of the past. Everywhere they are like signposts pointing to the places where one's eye would like to rest. Sixty to one hundred feet in height, with a conical stone roof, an entirely smooth surface, and pierced by a few narrow openings, and by a door generally twelve to fifteen feet from the ground, they are to be found all over Ireland,

always near, but perfectly detached from, one or several churches. One can count ninety of them, twenty of which are practically intact. None are finer than those of Cashel, of Glendalough, and above all of Devenish—an exquisite island of Lough Erne, which, green with fields and destitute of trees or shrubs, is peopled with magnificent ruins.

What were these towers? The most extravagant origins have been suggested for them—Phœnician, Persian, Druidic, Danish. The most incongruous and extraordinary intentions have also been assigned to them—temples of fire worshippers, Druidic minarets, astronomical observatories and watch-towers. Archæology is full of speculation in every country, but in Ireland its speculative licence seems to me unbounded. The works of Petrie and Lord Dunraven have, however, swept away all these hypotheses.

The round towers were simply belfrys separated from their churches, and destined to serve at the same time as keeps in cases of attack. They were apparently built between the ninth and tenth and the twelfth centuries. The magnificent round crosses, said to be Celtic, date from the same period. Good examples of these are the crosses of Tuam, Monasterboice, Kells, and

Clonmacnoise, where the intertwining designs are of great imaginative richness, while their figure carvings are especially valuable historically for their reproduction of contemporary ecclesiastical and military costumes. These carvings are the last word of an art which commenced with a rough cross cut out of a slab of stone. Moreover, these crosses soon ceased to be merely associated with burial-grounds, and came to be used as marks showing the limits of some sanctuary, or as monuments placed to keep some memorable spot vivid in the minds of men. Fifty-five are still existent, eight of which are enriched by inscriptions.

More rough and ancient still are the stone *teampulls*, the first Christian sanctuaries in Ireland, things which seem hardly to have grown old at all, so little power has time to affect their original crudity of outline. Time? In front of the immobility of these stone ruins one asks oneself whether such a thing exists at all outside of the changes and agitations of humanity. Leave the latter and nothing changes—everything endures eternally. These altars, built in the sixth or seventh century, give to the very places in which they stand, and which modernity

does not seem to have touched, the permanent look of bygone ages. But in truth no other country in Europe is so faithful to the past as Ireland. The West especially—the savage Connemara, and the Isles on the coasts of Mayo, Galway, and Clare—appears to have been forgotten by time. Situated well off the shore of County Sligo, the Island of Inishmurray still possesses, in a circle of stones, three beehive-built cells and three little churches, of which one, called the monastery, is perhaps contemporary with St. Molairs. Here, having no clergy, all the inhabitants used to gather together every Sunday and pray in common. Once a year a priest came over to celebrate the necessary marriages. In Inch a Goill, again, we still see, in the middle of Lough Corrib, the church founded by St. Patrick. The Isles of Arran—Inishmore, Inishmaan, Inisheer — true burial-grounds of the past, can show among their other ruins chapels belonging to the sixth century. At Kerry also, among the remains beautifying the green Isle of Inisfallen, is the oratory of St. Finian the Leperous. Near Tralee we get the oratory of Gallerus, a fine stone hut with a door and window opposite to one another, probably belonging to

the fifth century. While on the rock of the Great Skellig, off the Isle of Valencia, so beautiful with its two romantic and wild-looking peaks, and only to be reached by a winding calvary of 620 steps, we get sheltered beneath one of its barren heights, a dead and mystic city, still showing a little hoard of cells, oratories, and crosses, as well as the Church of St. Michael and five cemeteries.

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We can thus wander among the earliest dwelling-places of Christianity, and of the Irish apostles, St. Patrick, St. Kevin, St. Kieran, St. Finian, and St. Columba, entering the very churches of the first of the faithful. But behind this sacred superstructure Ireland reveals an existence older still, and preserves wonderful fragments of a remoter pagan period. The latter appears as the background which the newer Christian buildings were glad enough at the beginning to make use of. According to tradition, the converted pagan monarchs often yielded up their fortresses as homes or churches for the missionaries. This certainly must have been done in the case of Cashel, where between the formidable walls of the "duns" one finds, with hardly any change of architecture, the

sanctuaries and hermitages of the primitive Church. Thus always in this extraordinary country, ravaged though it has been by wars of every kind, no century destroys the other, and age follows age as if merely to complete the picture of a nation stubbornly resistant to the transmutations of development and time.

No one knows when the giant masses of the "duns," which are like the cyclopean citadels of Tiryns and Mycenæ, took possession of the soil of Ireland. The doors, clumsily cut out of circular walls, four yards thick, narrow towards the top, while an enormous slab of stone, supported by oblique jambs, forms the lintel. Circular paths run along the inner edge of the enclosure, which is reached by stairs cut out of the thickness of the walls, in which are also little cells, for all the world like sentry-boxes. Other outer enclosures support or strengthen the first. Sometimes these bristle with sharp stones driven into the ground like spikes. This is the case at Ængus, one of the seven duns of the Isles of Aran, which is regarded by many people as the finest barbaric monument left in Europe. Slaigne-Fort, near the bay of Kenmare, is almost equally well preserved. They were

no doubt built by the Celtic tribes whose invasion of Ireland dates back earlier than the sixth century B.C. Philology, indeed, leads one to think that the Irish had been separated from the rest of the Celts some centuries before the latter reached Gaul and Spain. These mysterious erections are placed upon solitary hills in the very heart of the moorlands, and no other traces of their builders are to be found anywhere near the neighbourhood. Still more mysterious, and belonging to a still more remote prehistoric period, are the megalithic remains, and the mounds of earth, which in the wastes of Ireland as in those of our own Brittany suggest the glory of an almost fabulous length of existence. Certain stones are rendered more incomprehensible even than the rest by *Ogham* signs, formed by four different groups of incised strokes—to the right, to the left, obliquely, and by notches upon the edge itself. The Ogham alphabet has now been deciphered. But though the soil has been turned upside down by excavations, the cromlechs, tumuli, stone circles, *menhirs* or *gillams*, pierced stones, and inumerable *raths*, preserve here, as elsewhere, the mystery of their design and origin.

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From the most modern ruins to those of which little is known, Ireland offers a traveller an almost unique opportunity of piercing the veil of time and of penetrating into forgotten ages. In a few stray memories it is not easy to give an idea of the magic quality of a history that has always been poetic to its heart's core. And yet it seems to me that one's impressions could after all be summed up by a single phrase —by the statement that Ireland is the land of the past. Everything there recalls the days that have gone, and that seem immortalised by the stone relics that remain. No freshening activities have swept across the soil, utilising these same stone relics for the constant rebuildings that in other countries help so largely to give an aspect of youth and newness to the world. Some nations have the look of gardens, immersed in light and gentleness and a happy *busy-ness*. Others remind one of great workshops, full of noise and smoke and lustiness. But Ireland is like a cemetery, whose grass strewn with ruins makes one think more than anything of a number of scattered burial-grounds.

CHAPTER V

The Drama of the Past

In the external embellishment of nature we have seen what the passing of the centuries and the destiny of Ireland have done for its towns and landscapes. We have found upon the very earth itself the traces left by the past. We must now recall this past, and try to disentangle its historical sequences, for only by so doing can we either understand the present or foretell the future.

In the early Middle Ages, against a background of legendary glory, Ireland shone like some bright emerald in the West. Its numerous churches, monasteries, and schools gave it a certain fascination and importance; King Alfred of Northumberland and other important personages came over to it to study. The "Isle of Saints" also sent forth shining lights through-

out the world. Luxeuil and Bobbio owe their existence to St. Columba, Lagny to St. Fursy, and Glaris to St. Fridolan. St. Gall evangelised Switzerland, St. Frigidia became Bishop of Lucca, St. Livinus suffered martyrdom in Flanders, St. Arbogast was Bishop of Strasburg, St. Killian became apostle of Franconia. All Southern Germany, besides, was covered with abbeys, which, ten centuries later, were still known as *Schotten-Klosters*, or Irish convents.

Now let us look away from its spiritual radiance to the other side of the Irish character. Intelligent, excitable, generous and heroic, the Celts, unlike their Welsh or English neighbours, had no powers of organisation. There was no coherence, no order, nothing resembling the united strength of a Greek or Roman Empire. The whole country was divided into rival and inimical clans, each led by a military chief, whose valour was his sole recommendation, and whose only wealth lay in the number of his flocks. Two hundred tribes of this type were divided into five chief provinces or kingdoms—Meath, Ulster, Munster, Leinster, and Connaught. One of the five kings was the Ard-ri, or supreme king, and the position was the object of much

bloody competition. Sociology has tried to find "the causes of the divisional governments which rendered the Celtic race so extremely vulnerable." It is sufficient here to state that they existed, and were the reason of the servitude of the Gauls by the Romans, of Britain by the Anglo-Saxons, and finally of Ireland by the English.

Divided Ireland? Truly she was that from the beginning. And yet, with all her division, similarity of language, laws, and religion created a more genuine social and moral unity than can ever be given by mere political uniformity only. She had already but one soul. Even in these days of petty clanships, the essential character of a nation, which has never been able either to organise itself or to perish, was already clearly defined. It was at one and the same time strong and yet incapable. It could not prevent the inroads of savage Vikings, nor those of the Norwegians and Danes,—referred to by old chroniclers as the white and black Pagans,—but it helped to preserve the Irish personality intact through every kind of vicissitude.

Unfortunately, its internal divisions robbed Ireland of the strength to resist invaders. The

Norman chieftains found allies among the clans, and, aided by the feuds perpetually going on among them, helped to further incite them. Nevertheless, as a whole, the Irish nation itself contrived to survive, resist, and assimilate. For a moment even it seemed as if she was about to amalgamate into one corporate whole, and to form a state at last. This moment was the golden age of independence. The great Brian Boru, at first king of Munster and then supreme ruler of Ireland, not only drove out or subdued the invaders, but imposed the authority of Ard-ri upon the small rebel kings and princes of the larger provinces. The height of this triumph was reached upon the last day of his life, when the victory of Clontarf routed the allied Vikings. Unfortunately, the old sovereign was killed just after the battle, in the tent into which he had retired to rest (1014).

Whether Brian Boru's conduct was due to national feeling or to policy, whether it was simply the result of a desire to avenge his murdered brother or sprung purely from ambition, history does not say, and for that matter is of no great moment. The various motives of a human being are usually so complex and inter-

twined that action can never be looked upon as the result of one only. All that concerns us here is to follow, through its history, the varying fortunes of Ireland. It is of no importance to this purpose whether Brian and his contemporaries knew the real significance of what he did or not, though time, and that great revealer of truth, legend, soon showed Brian as the hero of its age of independence, just as it showed Dermot MacMurragh as the symbol of its internal dissensions and of its first fatal appeal to strangers for assistance.

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MacMurragh's history is well known. King of Leinster, he carried off the wife of the king of Breffney. Condemned by the supreme king, who sided with the outraged husband, he went over and swore allegiance to Henry II. of England. From this dates the Anglo-Norman conquest. This conquest did not at first, either to the Irish or the English, betray anything like its full significance. The English adventurers who had responded to the appeal of the felon king, and who had landed in the spring and summer of 1171 on the south coast of Ireland,—Robert Fitz-Stephen, Morris Fitzgerald, Morris Prender-

gast, Raymond the Great, and their leader the Earl of Pembroke, known as Richard Strongbow, —were merely looked upon as foreign allies of a native prince. They soon, however, made themselves odious by their violence and cruelties. When, therefore, King Henry arrived at Waterford, ostensibly as a sovereign displeased at the manner in which his vassals were seizing principalities and playing at independence, and when he personally—pacific, courteous, and with the glamour of opulence and power—defended the Irish against his own barons, no resistance was offered to his triumphal advance through the country. He reached Dublin without shedding a single drop of blood, and in a hastily constructed but sumptuously furnished palace celebrated the Christmas festival and received the homage of several of the native monarchs.

This policy, whether dictated by cunning or goodwill, could only be advantageous to Ireland. A. M. Sutherland, the well-known historian, does not hesitate to say that the king's sudden return to England, to which he was recalled by the complications following upon the murder of Thomas à Beckett, was a real disaster for Ireland. Had he remained, Ireland would

no doubt have passed into the possession of the English Crown several hundred years earlier than it did. At the same time, it would have been spared centuries of carnage, persecution, and of unparalleled atrocities. All Henry II. wanted was a new kingdom. It never entered his head either to persecute or to annihilate.

His leniency brought him a great number of adherents among the minor princes. This may have been due partly to ambition and partly to a sincere desire for the public welfare, for one cannot repeat too often, nor lay too much insistence upon the complicated nature of human actions, which historians are over fond of dealing with after cut-and-dried methods.

Henry II. having gone, the old disturbances broke out again, and owing to internecine rivalries there were frequent alliances between the English barons and the Irish princes. Poor Ireland, more divided than ever, became inextricably entangled through spasmodic friendships with the enemy, as a whole so passionately hated and fought against. Years and centuries slipped by. The Norman barons had accumulated castles and fortresses, governing their dependants according to the feudal system of England.

Lands and retainers rapidly increased, but outside "The Pale," which they held only by force of arms, seethed the confused and suffering mass of the unassimilated Irish, whose indomitable and constant opposition only waited for a favourable opportunity to break into turbulence. Among these were to be counted the chieftains and their partisans, outwardly submissive to the Norman government, simply because they saw no way of avoiding it, and in consequence thought it best to reap what advantages could be had from the situation. The Danes also, who had settled along the coast, and whose only desire was to be left alone, adopted a similar attitude, being always ready to subordinate everything to their own interests. Poor Ireland, what chance had she of becoming a state or of resisting oppression? How could she possibly keep her soul, and the sacred past—which is, as it were, a nation's patrimony—from being contaminated by these influences? The drama of her destiny was becoming more involved every day.

But the soul of Ireland exhaled vitality, and only increased and was fortified through the subjugation of her people. It is a characteristic

of the Celtic race always to exercise more influence than it suffers, and to shape in its own likeness those who conquer it. It soon begat a race of Anglo-Irish, more Irish than the Irish themselves. *Ipsis Hibernis Hiberniores.* In 1295, indeed, a law was passed forbidding the English, under pain of severe penalties, to wear the Irish national dress. But nothing could stop the process of assimilation. The great rebellion of 1315, when Edward Bruce was crowned king of Ireland, proved to England the awful struggle it would entail if she was to maintain her authority in Ireland. A good many of the English settlers, conscious of the precariousness of trusting to England for safety, followed the example of the Geraldine family, and threw in their lot with the native population. In 1367, through the Statutes of Kilkenny, the severest penalties were promulgated against the English who adopted the names, customs, or dress of the Irish people. The Parliament issuing these laws had no representatives from the disaffected regions, or for that matter from those districts where the Irish influence was keenly felt.

This "curious anomaly," as it is called by

a national historian—this Irish Parliament, from which the Irish were excluded—gave the country a false air of political vitality, while remaining in reality nothing but a weapon of the English domination. Nevertheless, little by little the national spirit crept in, having in many cases won over its opponents. Consequently, when in 1800 the Irish Parliament was abolished, or more correctly speaking became absorbed in that of England, it seemed to the patriots as if the very end of the nation had come. From that day until 1875 (when it was changed to "Home Rule"), the "Repeal of the Union" became the watchword of national politics.

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But that was still a good way off. The desire for independence—later to find expression by a constitutional agitation for "Home Rule"—confined itself at this period to incessant uprisings and conspiracies. England's frequent Continental wars were obviously favourable to these Nationalist outbursts. Since Richard II. had landed in Ireland with a large force, intending to reduce the entire island to submission, and had been suddenly recalled to England, the

English had lost rather than gained ground in that country. Suddenly Henry VII. became aware that the Irish chieftains had grown more powerful than they had been since the time of the Norman invasion. In spite of deliberately incited rivalries, in spite of English intrigue and national folly, it seemed as if the patriotism of Ireland, indestructible in quantity, could only be extinguished in one part to break out more fiercely in another.

The king then decided to reduce the country by a more insidious and permanent method than by simple fighting. Ireland was to be struck in the very essence of her national vitality. Until then no real efforts had been made to impose the English code upon Ireland. Henry VII. decided that the moment had come to enforce a complete supremacy of the English Constitution upon these indomitable and tiresome people. Sir Edward Poynings, therefore, was sent over as Lord Deputy, accompanied by a large army. At Drogheda, having summoned together a Parliament, of whose members he was sure, he passed in 1495 the law which bears his name. Its two principal clauses were that all the laws of England applied with equal force to Ireland, and that no law, however local its

application, could be passed in the island without the consent of England. A little later, in 1541, Henry VIII. proclaimed himself king of Ireland, and a large number of the old chiefs received English titles. O'Brien became Earl of Thomond, Ulick MacWilliam Earl of Clanricarde, Hugh O'Donnell Earl Tyrconnell, O'Neill Earl of Tyrone, and MacGiolla Phadraig, Baron Ossory.

This was another step in the national disorganisation. Until now, though the nation had been divided, the clans had remained intact. For the future, the clans themselves were split in two: there was O'Neill of the English King and Queen, and an O'Neill of Ireland; an O'Donnell friendly to England, and an O'Donnell fiercely rebellious.

Ireland, oppressed by foreign laws and betrayed by a good many of its own princes, was no longer anything but a part of the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, though her body was enslaved and mutilated, her soul was but thrown back upon itself. It was this soul against which the English domination next proposed to fight—a fight in which there was no longer any question of subduing or annexing, but of horrible persecution and devastation.

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Henry VIII. had already rid England of Roman Catholicism, to which the "Isle of Saints" had remained faithful. Religion was in fact the last bulwark behind which the Irish national spirit had entrenched itself. Defence of the soil of their ancestors had become identified with the defence of the faith practised by these ancestors, and what the resistance lost in extensiveness it had gained in depth and profundity. Romanism embodied the spirit of Irish Nationalism, and henceforward the policy of England no longer distinguished between the two.

From that time the condition of Ireland became one of chronic rebellion. Persecution and confiscation merely incited further outbreaks. The island became so unsafe for the English that none but adventurers would accept the gift of land there. These hardly conduced to the peace of the country. The people were, moreover, kept in a perpetual state of ferment by the mingled patriotism and ambition of the native chiefs. The O'Neills' uprisings continued from the reign of Elizabeth until the end of Charles the First's, when Cromwell conceived the idea of a general extermination.

Everything incited him to it: to begin with, his own puritanical fanaticism made him rabid against the religion of Ireland; secondly, the arbitrary quality of his mind was exasperated by a people continually rebellious; and lastly, the republic was very unpopular in Ireland, where it had immediately roused enthusiastic loyalty to the Stuarts. A new element of antagonism had thus arisen between the two countries. Political exigency urged Cromwell to war; and personal motives converted it into a massacre. I need not mention here the wholesale slaughter and brutalities (those of Drogheda and Wexford have become proverbial) with which Cromwell filled the three years of his Irish viceregency. Only the end concerns us, when the Protector —to the accompaniment of psalm-singing—having killed, burned, and pillaged all he could, came to the conclusion that it was time to annihilate this race altogether. He decided to do away with the Irish, and parcel out the country among his own people. As it was not possible immediately to kill off the remnant that had survived his three years' treatment, he proposed to adopt the system since followed by the Americans in the case of the Red Indians. The

Irish, driven from their lands, were to be penned up in one isolated spot. Naturally the most remote and wild part of the island was chosen, and the insurgents were transplanted to the sterile wastes of Connaught, thus converted to an Irish "Far West." This is known as the "transplantation." At the same time, every measure was taken to depopulate the country. Men were not only deported wholesale to the West Indies, but encouraged to enlist in foreign armies; the French army was filled with Irish officers and men. And still the people resisted. They retreated only little by little to recover lost ground. Nothing so clearly as this reveals the intense vitality of the Irish temperament.

But the country was very far from having come to an end of the agonies caused by England's oppression. Under the Restoration, in spite of Charles the Second's indifference, they remained faithful to the Stuarts—the exiled James was recognised as king of Ireland, and was staunchly supported to the end. William the Third's army encamped outside Limerick, failed to capture the city, and was obliged to come to terms with its defender. Sarsfield capitulated only on the condition of religious liberty for Ireland. How England kept

that promise is well known. She devised a course of oppression and persecution to which by comparison the previous sufferings of Ireland were as nothing. One must have seen those "penal laws" to believe that any European country, in the age of Locke, could have conceived and put into force so monstrous a legislation. The English Protestant statesman, Burke, called them a masterpiece of human perversity, cunningly and artistically devised to impress, impoverish, and degrade a nation.

First of all, the Catholics lost all civil rights. They could neither vote nor were they eligible for Parliament. All public appointments, whether in the army, navy, or Government, were closed to them. Even the law as a profession was barred to them. No Catholic, moreover, was allowed to carry arms, and two magistrates or sheriffs were authorised to pay constant domiciliary visits in search of weapons. Every infraction of this law was punished by fines, imprisonment, flogging, the pillory, or even in some cases by a combination of these penalties. A Catholic could not own a horse of more than £5 in value, and in exchange for that sum he was obliged to give it up to any Protestant

who might demand it. Finally, no Catholic could either buy or inherit or receive as a gift any land whatsoever. But it is useless to cavil at William for this. He was after all, merely a zealous follower of Louis XIV. with his intolerant edicts against the Huguenots, and his motto blazoned everywhere, "For Liberty." Moreover, so far these things are nothing.

In addition, if the son of a Roman Catholic apostatised, he became legally entitled to all his father's property, and his father sank into the position of a mere life tenant. The wife of a Catholic, if she apostatised, was immediately freed from her husband's control, and a certain amount of her husband's property was assigned to her. A child had only to profess to be a Protestant to be at once removed from its father's care and placed under the guardianship of some Protestant relative, to whom the father was obliged to pay an annual sum for its education. These laws were passed in the reigns of William III. and Anne—that is, between 1688 and 1714. Let us hasten to add that a large number of Irish Protestants at great personal risk and sacrifice did all they could to protect their Catholic neighbours against these edicts.

One can but admire the conscientious scruples shown by them, as well as the admirable discernment of Burke. It is not, however, our business to criticise, but to try and understand as far as possible.

In England, king and Parliament were both equally exasperated against Ireland. The vitality of the race and the intensity of its national feeling seemed to make all repressive measures futile. Hatred against England was now besides further complicated by a violent dislike to the reigning dynasty. Ireland had become not only a danger to the power of Great Britain, but an actual menace to the Crown. The nationalism and the Catholicism of Ireland had become aggravated by loyalism to the Jacobites. The Government party were already distinguished by the title of "Orangeist," and this division among themselves only made the general disintegration more passionate and more envenomed. Truly it was not possible either to subdue or destroy this people! And still England persisted in her attempts to do one or the other.

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All she succeeded in doing was to ruin and madden the country, until she had before her

nothing but an enfevered and miserable nation, —the poor old woman, "*Shan van vocht.*" Outrage had passed the bounds of endurance. It had become too much. A transformation was in progress, but not that hoped for by the English. The national spirit, strained to breaking-point, had permeated even the strangers so long associated with its history. As at the time of the Kilkenny Statutes, though now perhaps with more enthusiasm, the native Irish and the Anglo-Irish combined together to protect their mutual interests. The privileged classes made common cause with the Irish nation. A Constitutional opposition was formed, whose precursors, William Molyneux (*The Case of Ireland*, 1698) and Swift (*The Drapier Letters*, 1724) were of English origin and of the Anglican religion. The Protestant party had at last begun to understand that their policy against the Catholics was reacting against themselves. "Papism has fallen," wrote one historian,[1] "but Ireland has fallen with it." It was now a question of raising the latter without touching the former, and of giving a free hand to the Irish party, which, since the passing of Poynings' Law, had

[1] Mr. Wyse, *History of the Catholic Association.*

been little more than a mere committee of the English Parliament. The Patriotic party was organised under the leadership of Charles Lucas, founder of *Freeman's Journal*, who, in spite of his nationalism, never ceased to identify the Irish nation with the Irish Protestants. The idea of admitting the Catholics—that is, the mass of the population into the Constitution—was vehemently opposed by him. He died in 1770, at the very moment when, upon the distant shores of America, the wave of liberty was just about to break.

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The War of Independence had thinned the Irish as well as the English troops. The patriotic spirit of the volunteer army organised for the eventual defence of the island supported the Constitutional opposition. The Catholics forgot their grievances, and seconded with all their energy the national movement. They bought, says an Irish historian, the musket that the law had forbidden them to carry, and, putting it in the hands of their Protestant compatriots, invited them to take part in this glorious work—the liberation of their common country.[1] The

[1] A. M. Sullivan, *The Story of Ireland*, chap. lxxvii.

end of this movement, organised by Lord Charlemont, is well known. On the 16th of April, 1782, in a lucid and impassioned speech, Grattan, the great orator of the Opposition, roused by the very spirit of the nation, moved in Parliament, amidst a wave of general enthusiasm, the legislative independence of Ireland. Passed unanimously, it was in less than a month sanctioned by the English Government.

The joy which greeted this political triumph was not to last. The independent Parliament by no means really meant a national representation. The Catholics, who were not at first even electors, and were never eligible as members, were not slow in withdrawing their confidence in it. The society of the "United Irishmen" was formed with the object of organising clubs all over the country to effect the political union of the Irish, without religious distinction, and to obtain by constitutional methods a complete representation of every religion and every class in the Irish Parliament. The leaders, Hamilton Rowan and T. W. Tone, were Protestants. It is easy to imagine how this society was driven, through the obstinacy of George III., to resort to all kinds of unconstitutional plans for the

Catholic emancipation, and how it turned to France, where the soldiers of the Revolution proclaimed themselves the champions of oppressed nations, and gave evidence of the power they wielded in the world.

This explains the rebellion of 1798, led by that well-known hero of romance, Lord Edward Fitzgerald. The English Government took the opportunity afforded by so easy a victory to wipe out the last trace of national independence. By insidious corruption and a jobbery of conscience which has hardly a parallel in history, it obtained from the Protestant Parliament in Dublin the pronouncement of its own condemnation and the assent to the legislative union with Great Britain.

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Possibly the English Government thought that it had now reached the end of the drama. Governments are apt to have these naïve fancies and to make wild tilts at the intangible. The soul of a people is evasive as air itself. "There is no more Ireland," some people said; "we have by degrees curbed it, crippled it, and finally extinguished it. This country, once independent, is now nothing but a vast province

of England." Posterity, who, having the advantage of time, sees events from a more dispassionate point of view, is astonished at the illusion. Parliamentary Bills change neither the nature of things nor the essence of national character. A province Ireland might be, but a province steeped in dissension and rebellion, and in which only strangers and a few docile subjects, who had accepted the laws and the religion of the conqueror, enjoyed popular rights, while the great mass of the people were debarred from them. It would have been better, perhaps, putting aside the present state of affairs, if the political spirit of the time had merely consisted in an attempt to secure the abrogation of these laws.

The national sentiment was expressed in another idea—the "Repeal of the Union," or, in other words, the re-establishment of the Dublin Parliament. It was a Parliament which had but little represented the Irish nation, which had done it very little good, and which had finally destroyed itself. Nevertheless, Ireland now remained inconsolable at its loss, and, regarding it as the symbol of nationality, became absorbed in the dream of reviving it.

But just at first circumstances brought a more urgent and vital question than that of repeal into the foreground—that of Catholic emancipation. The whole of the United Kingdom was interested in this matter. For more than a century, hereditary peers, such as the Duke of Norfolk, had been deprived of their seats in the House of Lords because they could not, without perjury, take the oath demanded of them. But for Ireland the matter was much more serious, because it was a question whether or not a Catholic country should be doomed to be represented only by Protestants. The problem was not laid down in the abstract by theorists; it was an actual and existing circumstance, and demanded immediate attention. O'Connell, the man of intellect and heart, who since 1806 had directed the Constitutional policy of Ireland, and who had become every day more and more obviously the national hero, was for a long time a victim to this injustice. Because he held the same religion as his compatriots he was forbidden to represent them, and had no right to a seat in Parliament. But in 1828 he was elected for County Clare. The question then arose whether they would

exclude from the Commons a man so powerful that at any general election he could secure the election of forty Catholics, or be returned himself from forty different places. The English Prime Minister thought that it would be madness to do so, and although, as a Tory, he was himself hostile to the measure, he presented an Emancipation Bill at the opening of the next session, which was passed by both Houses, and immediately received the royal sanction.

But nothing could wean Ireland from its dream, and O'Connell once more took up the campaign in favour of repeal. A great organiser, a magnificent speaker, an impassioned agitator for equality, he roused the people without losing control of them, and instilled the doctrine of personal rights without once trying to intoxicate them with the sense of their own brute strength. Few men have had a greater command both over their audience and their own utterances. It was in truth a wonderful triumph, this of a nation's soul above the disasters of its material being; this following, in a country destitute of every remnant of a kingdom, after "a king without a crown." Only to a people of extreme idealism would it have been possible. But the

great meetings of 1843 seemed at last to pave the way for some momentous triumph. At Trim, on the 16th of March, O'Connell addressed an audience of thirty thousand; at Mullingar, on the 3rd of May, an audience of one hundred thousand; and at Tara, on the 15th of August, no less than two hundred and fifty thousand people gathered to hear him. A still more enormous meeting was announced for the 5th of October at Clontarf, in the immense plain where Brian Boru had once beaten the Danes. A million people — all the able-bodied men of Ireland, in fact—were to muster on this occasion. The Government stepped in and forbade the meeting. O'Connell had but to give the signal and all Ireland would have risen to his call. But he let the opportunity pass, and issued a proclamation enjoining obedience to the Government.

This conciliatory action caused a split among the Nationalists. The younger and more violent members broke away to form the "Young Ireland" party. Smith O'Brien, Thomas Francis Meagher, and Mitchell headed the new movement. Its result in the rising of 1848 was no doubt "an almost childish effort,"[1] and certainly it was

[1] Édouard Hervé, *La Crise Irlandaise.*

severely punished. But it helped to rouse and stimulate dormant feelings in the people. The papers, *The Nation* (1842) and the *United Irishmen* (1847), began to give a place to Irish literature, and its reproductions laid bare the literary originality of the old Irish writers. Gradually the country revived its old songs and legends, which were, after all, not far to seek, as all the younger generation knew them by heart. Meanwhile, misery and depopulation were both on the increase. Those who were not carried off by the famine resigned themselves to thoughts of exile, and emigrated to America. In five years (1847–1851) nearly fifteen hundred thousand people left the country, while famine carried off another sixty thousand. Political and national questions slunk into the background, to give place to the mere question of how to live. The problem for poor Ireland seemed past solution. Thc tenant had no right whatever to the land he cultivated. In spite of the high rent for farms, the demand for them was greater than the supply. In this purely agricultural country, where all other industries are so curiously lacking, men willing to work could get no land to work upon. Since the beginning of

the eighteenth century peasant destitution had caused agrarian crimes, which increased during the first part of the nineteenth century, between the Union and the commencement of the Constitutional agitation. Its most violent manifestations were in the form of Fenianism, originally started among the emigrants in America, where bitterness was sharpened by the exasperation of exile. Even England trembled under it. Among its work was the invasion of Canada, the crisis at Manchester, the explosion at Clerkenwell, the assassinations at Phœnix Park (Lord Frederick Cavendish, Secretary of State for Ireland, and the Vice-Secretary, Mr. Burke), and the attempts to blow up London Bridge and the Houses of Parliament.

Happily, the Agrarian Question, which as early as 1868 had been taken up by Gladstone, was to engage the attention of Parliament. Charles Stewart Parnell became the new leader of the movement, both in Ireland with his "Land League" efforts, and in the House, where he ruled the Nationalist party with a rod of iron, made himself the arbiter of Ministerial destinies—a parliamentary Warwick. Of English origin, and both a landlord and a Protestant, Parnell is a

striking example of the strength of the Irish national feeling. Men of his stamp seemed flung into the foremost ranks of history, not through their own, but through their country's quivering desire to live. They are, as it were, the personification and individualisation of the nation—strong because upheld by her, clever because at heart guided by her, and as tenacious as she herself is indestructible. In the vicissitude of these men's public careers the fate of the nation seems to rise or fall.

Parnell commenced his agitations at the very moment when the welfare of Ireland was to find a champion in an English statesman. In 1868 Mr. Gladstone passed a Bill abolishing the Protestant religion as the state religion of Ireland. The political equality of the Catholics acquired through the Emancipation Bill of 1829 was thus completed by equality of religion, and one of the deepest and most disastrous effects of the English conquest was withdrawn from Ireland. The Roman Catholic peasant was at last no longer obliged to pay tithe to the Anglican clergyman and to a Church forced upon him by the tyranny of his conqueror. National passions, religious feelings, and strong racial hatred had

all equally revolted against this compulsory maintenance of a religion both in itself repugnant and the visible symbol of a nation's servitude.

In the same year Gladstone passed a law dealing with tenants' rights, which completed in 1881 by the second Land Act, was to terminate in the law of 1903. Through these three Acts, which after conferring several considerable benefits upon the tenant, made him a sort of joint owner in the land—a measure which only opposed the interests and embittered the relationships of both parties—the English Government finally decided to apply the principle so brilliantly laid down by M. Édouard Hervé, after the failure of Gladstone's Agrarian Laws—"The land that you have taken from the tribe to give to the landlord, buy back again from the landlord and give to the peasant. In this fashion property in Ireland will complete the circle of its transformations. It was first collective, then feudal, then individual, or in other words, land was first owned by the tribe, then by the feudal lord, and finally by the peasant." [1]

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[1] Édouard Hervé, *La Crise Irlandaise*, chap. xi.

The Emancipation of the Catholics in 1829, the Disestablishment of the Church in 1868, and the Land Bill in 1903 combined together to lift the chief grievances which the English conquest had laid upon the soul of Ireland. Other Bills, less striking perhaps but hardly less effective, were also passed between the first and last of these dates. But nothing could appease the national feelings, exasperated as they were by so many centuries of struggle. To enjoy the same rights and liberties as England was perhaps sufficient to ensure the material prosperity of Ireland, but could not touch the goal for which both her pride and her heart equally yearned. Even now the same dream obsesses her—the dream of separate legislation and an Irish Parliament at Dublin. Ireland still upholds her right to remain a nation and to enjoy self-government, *Home Rule*. This, since Isaac Butt, has become the password replacing the old cry of *Repeal*. It was the one aim of Parnell and the whole Nationalist party, and once or twice has seemed even near attainment. In 1886 Mr. Gladstone proposed a Home Rule Bill, which was rejected by 343 votes to 313. In 1903 a second, attenuated Bill was passed by the House of

Commons, but was rejected by the House of Lords. Nevertheless, Parnell's successors—John Redmond, William O'Brien, and T. W. Russell—still remain faithful to the old ideal, while the whole Nationalist programme is mapped out with the one object of attaining it.

Is this the final development of the drama whose chief phases we have just endeavoured to retrace? We are not prepared to say so. One must first realise what the actual condition of Ireland is. Only by getting some idea of that can one possibly foretell where the future will lead her.

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CHAPTER VI

The Awakening of National Life

Seven centuries of an unequal struggle have exhausted Ireland. A melancholy, breathing ruin and desolation, has penetrated its cities and its villages. But this anæmia is not death. One suspects the hardiness which underlies this life of physical misery, just as in normally healthy organisms worn out by overstrain, exhausted strength is always ready to recoup itself. The life of Ireland is everywhere revivifying, as the aspect of the country clearly proves. By the side of an old abandoned cottage you see a little house with its lean-to shed roofed with slate or sheet iron. One cannot go very far without coming across a little National school, sometimes lost in the desert waste. The least pretentious towns have their banks and nice new buildings. Churches are everywhere, gorgeous and striking.

Notices upon the walls and large cards placed in the shop windows arrest the passer-by with an appeal to collaborate in the effort that the country is making to ameliorate its condition. On them is written "Encourage national industries." "Relearn the national language" is also tacitly said everywhere by the employment of Gaelic characters in the names of streets, shop signs, newspaper headings, and the numerous Irish books on sale at the booksellers'. There is also a tendency to return to national games and to the festivals of old Ireland. The local *Feis* take place almost every day in summer, and the grand *Oireachtas* of May is celebrated once a year in Dublin. The Irish nation is beginning to wake up, to repossess itself, to take its interests in hand, and to try and make the best of life under the circumstances in which fate has placed it, while still hoping for better days should it please God to send them. Is not this the surest way to allure them? One must first of all live, and prove oneself robust and valiant. A nation forfeits its rights to victory when it neglects the chief essentials for procuring it.

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For long Ireland believed that it was sufficient

merely to claim her rights. She wasted her time in futile cries and agitations, while neglecting the means of obtaining what she wanted. Hypnotised by the end in view, she ever allowed the nationality on which she laid so much stress to become enfeebled and enervated. Through all the tragic violence of the past she had kept her soul, though her body, crippled on the field of battle, devastated by foreign laws, had been for a long time little more than a dying shadow. And even the soul, persecuted and exhausted as it was, lived only through its own desires, its hopes and dreams, without power any longer to act upon the lethargy of the body it inhabited. Unconsciously the mind and manners of the country had become anglicised. English society and culture brought to Ireland by "the colonies and garrisons" had inevitably influenced a people worn out by centuries of suffering and struggle as well as decimated by famines and by exile. A new class had been formed, Irish at heart, but English in its manners and language—the Protestant and National upper middle classes, of which Henry Grattan, defender of the liberties of the Dublin Parliament, the Irish Demosthenes and the victor of 1782, is the most illustrious

representative. Even Thomas Moore, the national poet, wrote in English, whilst O'Connell, the national hero, spoke in the same language. It seemed as if even the old genius of Ireland had let its personality be harried out of her.

When in 1893 the defeat of Home Rule and the consequent Unionist majority once more rendered all hopes of political independence vague and distant, Irish energy centred itself upon the reconstruction of a more real and vital national life than the mirage of a Parliament in Dublin, by which its patriots had been so long dazzled. The first thing they did was to turn their attention to the national language. The foundation of the Gaelic League in 1893 was like the dawn of an Irish literary renaissance. The old language of Ireland, which had known centuries of glory during the Middle Ages, and which again, through Geoffrey Keating and his successors, had enjoyed a brief period of distinction in the seventeenth century, was being more and more forgotten every day. First the aristocracy and then the middle classes had ceased to make use of it, and finally the peasants had followed their example. Emigration had done the rest, so that the number of people who

still spoke Gaelic in Ireland was now about thirty thousand, and those who were still capable of understanding it about seven hundred thousand —that is, one-sixth of the population. But for the last ten years Ireland has begun with an enthusiastic ardour to relearn the language of its ancestors. " The lessons " formerly arranged by Father O'Growney are sold by the million at a penny a copy. Branches of the League extend not only over all Ireland, but in England, America, Australia—that is, everywhere where " Ireland in exile " is to be found.

The founder and President, Mr. Douglas Hyde, is a Protestant; the Vice-President, Father O'Hickey, is a Catholic priest, and master at the Irish College of Maynooth. All true Irishmen are united in this enthusiastic endeavour to recover their national characteristics, and through them the soul of Ireland, so long restrained and dormant. They have no sense of learning a new language, but of recovering a vocabulary, without which the best part of their thoughts remained inarticulate. A curious example of this is given in the confessions of an Irish lady, who said, " When I first began to study it, the words sounded familiar to me. I seemed to know

them instinctively, and to be merely finding in my own brain things I did not know were there. It was as if until now I had never been really myself, and that the real me was suddenly laid bare, with a host of ideas and feelings that I had never previously been conscious of."[1]

The language is, in fact, full of treasures. It brings to the surface the amazing richness of the old traditions and culture of which it acts as the depositary. These same traditions are also being revived by national festivals, whose competitions (of which Irish people are passionately fond), from the simple winter meetings to the great annual gathering at Dublin, called *Oireachtas*, are entered by representatives of every kind of artistic talent, drawn from all the countryside. Excursions to historical places, concerts, lectures, *Feis*, or local competitions in singing, dancing, and music, have rapidly and naturally become popular among a people essentially idealistic, and equally proud of its past and impassioned of pleasure.

But it is essentially in literature that this awakening has found its chief utterance. The

[1] Quoted by M. Louis Paul Dubois in the first of the articles previously mentioned.

movement of 1840, inaugurated by the paper, *The Nation*, and by the leaders of "Young Ireland"—Charles Gavan Duffy, John Blake Mitchell, Thomas Davis, John Mitchell, Thomas Francis Meagher, William Smith O'Brien—was followed by a wonderful output of good literature. The *Dublin Magazine*, founded in 1887 by Sir C. Gavan Duffy, a friend and collaborator of Davis, became the chief organ of this renaissance. The old Celtic basis enriched a literature English in form, but full of old Irish myths, with the idealistic inspirations and feelings characteristic of the country. We can only mention in passing the names of George Sigersen, Standish O'Grady, T. W. Rolleston, Larminie, Nora Hopper, Jane Barlow, A. P. Graves, Katherine Tynan-Hinkson, Edward Martyn, George Moore, and above all, W. B. Yeats, the great Irish poet, as well as Douglas Hyde, so famous for his translations of old Celtic poems, with his perfect retention of their colour and their rhythm. The latter in addition has also written in the Gaelic language itself, and, following his example, a purely Celtic literature has sprung up from the pens of well-known Irish writers. Since 1889 an Irish theatre in

Dublin has not only staged pieces devoted to national themes, and played entirely by native actors, but very often written in the Gaelic language itself. This was the case with Douglas Hyde's *Casadh an-t Sugain*,—"The Twisted Cord," —which was received with so much enthusiasm in October 1901. The impulse has been given, and will not easily be arrested.

On the contrary, even the young generation, who now learn Gaelic both in the primary and secondary schools, imbibe old traditions as part of their education. This inclusion of the Gaelic language in the school curriculum of Ireland was not attained without a strenuous effort on the part of the League. The Irish Board of Education, consisting of men chosen by the Lord Lieutenant, only half gave in, and even then with very bad grace. The higher culture still remains English and Protestant, as at Trinity College, Dublin, which, founded by Elizabeth, is essentially an institution of the Conquest. A purely National University is desired by the country, and this want is supported in the House of Commons by such Liberals as Mr. John Morley, and even by the representative of Trinity College itself—Mr. W. H. Lecky. Meanwhile the little

free Catholic University, of which Newman was Rector from 1854 to 1858, though it has no power to confer degrees and is wholly unsupported by any grant, holds an honourable if necessarily secondary place in the education of Ireland.

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This revival of the national spirit is not only intellectual, but has its counterpart in the material side of life also. Already Ireland is beginning to show signs of a dawning prosperity, the result of an awakened activity and organisation. For these imaginative people are always ready to be interested in industrial things as soon as they realise that they are but a means to a higher end—in this case the victory of the more hardy soul over the debilitated body. Ireland has become at last aware of its own vitality, and is conscious of being capable and willing of earning its own right to existence.

"Encourage national industries." Is not this also the best means of combating English competition? The zest for work is doubled by the knowledge. Everywhere old industries are being revived, shipbuilding, woollen manufactures, lace-making, etc. Agriculture is being equally

developed, especially dairy-farming, through which the resources of the country are at last being usefully exploited, thanks to public instruction, to agricultural and industrial co-operations, and to the popular banks. In 1897 the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society was started, and in 1899 the department of agriculture and technical industry was organised under the presidency of the Chief Secretary for Ireland, Mr. George Wyndham.

Tenants in need of money are no longer obliged to resort to moneylenders. Credit banks have proved so advantageous that they have developed beyond all anticipation. In 1897 only four of these banks were in existence, but in twelve months they had increased to forty-one. Moreover, the Land Bill of 1903, if nothing occurs to interfere with its working, and if the chimerical spirit of the Irish does not make them once more drop the substance for the shadow, and draw them from a very real and immediate benefit into merely imaginary anticipations,—the Land Bill, I repeat, will slowly create a class of peasant proprietors, who will have every reason to be interested in the improvement of the land they cultivate.

This may also stop emigration by enabling Ireland to support her own children. I was witness at Doneraile how Lord Castletown, a descendant of the kings of Ossory, had made himself a manufacturer and merchant in order to help those whom I am tempted to still call his vassals, since Lord Castletown to this day exercises some forms of suzerainty under the guise of magistrate. He has started a steam sawmill for the men and a co-operative dairy for the women on his estates. Formerly the Irish peasant could do nothing with the milk he did not use; all the resources of Ireland's magnificent pasturage were wasted. Now, however much milk there is, it is brought to the dairy, and there, by the most improved methods and without the seller having to trouble either about its despatch or subsequent sale, it is converted into butter or cheese and sent to England, he securing the principal profit. The initiation of these many societies and the banks which so largely assist them is due in a great measure to Mr. Horace Plunkett, one of the most active promoters of the Irish rural movement. But enthusiasm is growing upon every side; there is an amalgamation of effort, and

with a revival of hope the general misery has commenced to lessen.

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But the evils of many centuries take more than a few years to eradicate, and it must not be thought that Ireland, as if under the wand of a fairy godmother, has been suddenly changed to a paradise. To be truthful, the happy effects of these new influences are as yet hardly discernible in the country, upon which so many devastations and distresses have left such deep-cut marks.

It is enough for us, however, to state the changes which are slowly taking place in the heart of this much maligned country. The political struggle, in which Ireland cannot possibly prove the stronger, is gradually slipping into the background, and no longer absorbs all the energies and hopes of the country.

Ireland has commenced to reorganise her existence. In this work she is showing an equally wholesome and fruitful strenuousness, because she is working along the natural lines of her character. We have referred to the results already achieved, and they should seemingly be even greater in the future.

No doubt there will be spasmodic returns to the old aggressive spirit. The war in the Transvaal and the outburst of English imperialism aroused once again political agitation in Ireland. The significant conduct of the Irish members cheering in the House of Commons the Tugela catastrophes is well known. A few weeks later, also, Colonel Lynch, who had just come back from leading a Boer commando in South Africa, was returned for Galway. Finally, the Irish members refused to be present at the Coronation of King Edward VII. A renewal of hostilities seemed clearly indicated, and the *United Irish League*, headed by Mr. William O'Brien, who seemed to have inherited the spirit of Parnell, was started. In two years it had reorganised the Nationalist party, and had returned to Parliament forty-five of its members. But this was but a merely passing crisis; the League itself was mainly occupied with agricultural questions, and it only needed a Bill to be placed before Parliament to relax the tension. And in the summer of 1903, when the King visited Ireland, he received not only in loyal Ulster, but in the South and West as well, a welcome certainly not to be anticipated from

his visit as Prince of Wales in 1885, nor even from that of his august mother in 1900.

The reason for this is, that in spite of slowness, deviations, and even of some backslidings, the country pursues the even tenor of its way towards progress and the revival of a national existence, which has all through proved itself superior to every vicissitude, and as indestructible as the destiny of Ireland itself.

Hitherto this national spirit has defied all obstacles, it has sometimes even used them for its own profit. But to-day its progress is open and unhindered. The Local Government Bill of 1898 brought into Ireland, with some reservations, the system of England and Scotland. The old "grand juries," formed by landlords chosen by the Viceroy, and entirely subservient to him, were replaced by elected juries, and councillors of districts, counties, and boroughs. The Nationalist party became very soon the predominating element on these boards, controlling through them local matters and the disposal of public appointments. Is this not practically an equivalent to the legislative government refused to the island, as well as a preparation—if it should ever come to pass—for

that other government so long and so ardently desired ?

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Such, briefly, stated is the present condition of Ireland. What termination to past incidents does it suggest ? This last question is all that is left us to consider, and brings to a close the brief sketches, in which, making the most of impressions and historical data, we have tried, from an unbiassed point of view, to observe, to remember, and last of all, if possible, to understand.

CHAPTER VII

The Soul of a Nation

The drama of the past and the revival of the present show that in spite of centuries of struggle the Irish nationality is too deep-rooted for suppression. In spite of divisions and quarrels it existed already in the days of independent *septs*. The Anglo-Norman Conquest only suppressed without destroying it. And ever since English efforts have remained equally powerless against its persistent vitality. In vain the Plantagenets tried to stifle it under the network of feudalism. In vain the Tudors laboured to transform it by a change of laws and institutions, and finally of the national religion itself. Nothing could uproot it. The capricious despotism of the Stuarts was less continuous but not less vexatious than that of their predecessors. Eventually Cromwell determined to destroy the

race altogether, but even his " transplantations " and exterminations failed to prove a deathblow.

Would Ireland never yield, then ? During the reigns of William III. and Anne she was tortured by a system of repressions which combined all the rigours of a siege with the horrors of a religious warfare. But even then Ireland refused to perish. Persecution merely defined and extended the nationalism it strove to extinguish, and the eighteenth century was to see the formation of the great Irish party of which Grattan became leader. The result was legislative independence and the separation of the Parliament of Dublin from that of Westminster. For a time it seemed as if an Irish political body was about to be organised. It was a simple and a dangerous illusion, for the very soul of Ireland was exhausted, and could only show the violence and the weakness and the restlessness of fever. The English Government then decided once more to put their dangerous patient under restraint, and in 1800 abolished the Parliament which gave Ireland the appearance of an independent state. Since then, however, has she been nothing more than a simple English province ?

Far from it, and the national sentiment, more

alive than ever, is concentrated in the fixed idea of "Repeal." It seems to Ireland that she is no longer a nation because she has no Parliament at Dublin, and that she will become one again as soon as that is restored to her. The political agitations so wonderfully organised by O'Connell had originally no other object but this restoration. The same ideal has always obsessed the Irish people. True, the time has gone by when they could reasonably hope once more to become an independent kingdom, but they cling to hopes of the future, and the dream of building up a republic, or at least of possessing a separate legislative government which would save them from falling to the level of an English province.

The illusion that independence can only be attained by means of an Irish Parliament still continues. No cost is reckoned too great to achieve it, and nothing really interests the people which has not this as the final aim of its labours.

Even the question of religious liberty was originally regarded from the same standpoint. The Catholic emancipation was necessary in order to admit the Nationalist party, ready above everything to fight for repeal, and more especially the great hero of the country, Daniel O'Connell,

into the English Parliament. Ireland obtained the emancipation, but never realised that this measure, which she looked upon as simply a means to an end, was the real end itself, since it swept away one of the greatest injustices that stifled the soul of Ireland. And it was in reality this soul that so sorely needed saving.

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In truth, it had been in a parlous state for the last few generations. During the first period after the Anglo-Norman Conquest Ireland had absorbed its conquerors. Its vitality had irresistibly influenced the strangers, more or less transforming them, and creating the Anglo-Irish race, against which England had found it necessary to take such energetic measures.

But under the Tudors all this was altered. Henry VII., Henry VIII., and Elizabeth had inaugurated a new policy, whose aim was to strike the soul, and to reach at Ireland through what had always, much more than her political existence, made her so individual and characteristic a nation. Nothing but a complete change of temperament could bring about a real annexation of Ireland, and it was this change they laboured to produce. After the conferring of

English titles, which brought the Irish chieftains under the feudal system, the gradual transformation of this aristocracy had been effected by means of education, intermarriage, the holding of public appointments, and life at the English Court. Gradually the English contagion had spread, favoured by the enormous influx of British colonists, the spread of English garrisons, and the constant influence of a rich and active people. The whole middle class had become English not only in language, habits, tastes, and manners, but very often also in religion. The peasants themselves, though faithful to Catholicism, had in a large measure unconsciously acquired the forms of civilisation imposed by Society. And to the real Irish this assimilation was the most humiliating and the most bitter of all defeats suffered by their country.

The political struggle still continued keen, aggravated by agrarian questions. We have already noted its various phases from the time of the "Repeal," changed later to "Home Rule," down to the present day, when it still remains the inaccessible goal, clouding every other issue, more vital and more urgent though it may be.

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The awakening of 1893, however, shows that contemporary Ireland has at last realised its own needs, and discovered the path of its future destiny. It is still, no doubt, absorbed in politics. It is too fighting a race ever to be anything else. But apart from politics national life is becoming slowly developed. The present gathers strength from the past, but only in order to go farther and do better. The motto of this movement might well be "Ireland a nation." Certainly no phrase could describe it better. No mere Parliament at Dublin could create this nation, though it is quite capable of being created without it. The Irish people have been too long deceived, though there is every reason to believe that the illusion is now slowly being dissipated.

But England, on the other hand, is equally deluded if it thinks Ireland has abandoned its old "chimeras" of independence. Since outbreaks have become more infrequent, and the island has commenced to attend to the business of living, England has perhaps unduly flattered itself that former dreams have been forgotten, and that the Home Rule mania has been killed by kindness. This was the policy of "Balfourism."

It was first employed by the brothers Arthur and Gerald Balfour, each of whom have at different times been Chief Secretary for Ireland. Its results were the Local Government Bill of 1898 and the Agricultural Bill of 1903. But we would rather believe that England has profited by past experiences. The gradual development of her colonial system may have taught her that the permanent union of the Empire can only be maintained by separate legislative government. The loyalty and prosperity of Canada and Australia are striking examples of this, and surely one is justified in supposing that England has understood the lessons conveyed by them. In any case, whether due to illusion or foresight, a new phase seems to be commencing in the history of Ireland. Previously the Irish sacrificed everything to Home Rule, and so rendered it impossible. The English now are willing to make any concessions except that same one of Home Rule, and by so doing are making it either inevitable or—superfluous.

If a day comes in truth when the national organs are restored to their original well-being, when the Irish, once more in possession of their own language, traditions, and literature, can

insist upon a really national education, and in full possession of personal rights are able to ensure the country being self-supporting, surely the moment will have come to recognise the nation's right to a separate Parliament, and to the legalisation of what has long existed in fact.

This moment would not be far off if personal interests and narrow prejudices did not continually work against it. The English Government sees both farther and more clearly than the little local potentates by which Ireland is encumbered. The inertia of the Irish *National Board* of Primary Education stultifies the practical value of Mr. Wyndham's Bill (May 22, 1901) on the bilingual question in the schools of the West of Ireland. There is the same prejudice against the national language by the Boards of Secondary Education. Without daring to entirely omit it from the school curriculum, every effort is made, from the small importance attached to it in examinations, to prevent its being taken up as a subject. Lastly, the official University, Trinity College, Dublin, maintains its privileges, finding in the fanaticism of the "Antipapists"—Anglicans or Presbyterians—as well as in the long-established ill-will of the "Orangeists" sufficient

encouragement to resist the legitimate demands of Ireland. Nevertheless, it is a useless resistance, because nothing can permanently prevent the intangible spirit of a nation gliding between all obstacles, while the more it is restrained the more it will break out, and the more certain it will be of final victory.

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The solution of the drama so far tends to be one neither foreseen nor desired by either country —that of independence in union. So long as neither side saw any alternative between that of a province and an independent state, Ireland only opposed harshness by constant rebellion, and obtained nothing but constant repression. Now, after the lacerations of long years of tyranny and resistance, a way of healing seems at last open to Ireland.

There was a period, and unfortunately a long one, when England had only two ideas on Ireland, those of either reforming or destroying it. It succeeded in doing neither. And after so many struggles and sacrifices it would not, and one must in justice add, could not, relinquish its conquest. The Irish Question seemed unanswerable, serving only as the

despair of statesmen and the exasperation of two countries by stirring up between them deplorable and irreconcilable hatreds.

The situation is considerably altered to-day. The United Kingdom is no longer obliged to face the abandonment of Ireland as the sole means of freeing her from the burden of a foreign domination. Union no longer signifies tyranny, any more than independence entails separation. Consequently, England has no interest in making one part of the kingdom miserable, while Ireland at last realises that she is free to live her own life under the Union. And to do this without exploitation or oppression suffices her. If both sides still keep some illusions, it is of little consequence. Probably the conquering state still dreams of complete political union, while the conquered state—if it ever was a state—still indulges "Home Rule" visions. But it has grown into a vague hope for the future, and no longer paralyses the activity of the present.

Shall we look into the future? It would not tell us its secret if we did. The only thing we do know—a thing all our impressions have gone to confirm—is that Ireland always has been, and never can cease to be a nation. She is more

than ever so to-day. But her triumph is essentially that of the soul, which is above all the vicissitudes of history and truly immortal. The Irish nation has always preserved through every material disaster that part of her which should not and could not perish, and through her very spiritual vitality has not only withstood trials almost without parallel, but has carried her characteristics intact into whatever country she has been forced by misfortune to emigrate. There is an Ireland in Australia and an Ireland in America. Could one separate also the share the Irish soul has had in the formation of English genius ?

It is, after all, a wonderful fortune for a race to be able to rise, as it were, above all the hurts of time, and eliminating space, whose laws she seems to defy, to build up a sort of ideal nation, whose destiny, henceforth assured, holds illimitable opportunities for the future.

No illusions can stand against the obviousness of this fact. On the other hand, no autonomy could ever sunder the links which bind Ireland to the English sovereignty. There can no longer be any question of the country becoming a separate state, either royal or republican. There

is no longer even question of complete legislative independence—that is, of a Parliament quite distinct from that of Westminster. If Home Rule is ever granted to Ireland at all, it will never be in any other form than that of a big "General Council," and will in no way exclude the return of members to the English Houses of Parliament.

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Looked at from this point of view, the attainment of Home Rule becomes easier and less necessary every day. The more possible it becomes for England to grant it, the more capable Ireland becomes of doing without it. Was it worth, one asks, the anguish of so long a struggle merely to arrive at this? It was, and the fact is one of the clearest and sternest lessons in history. The English entered Ireland under conditions which invited them to stay there, to extend their authority and consolidate their power. Interest and ambition both helped to encourage them to tighten their grip upon the country. Oppressions brought about rebellions, which in their turn led to further oppressions. If Ireland had resisted a little less violently, England would no doubt have completely annihilated it. But

in great conflicts the best of a nation is tried and burnished, and the only optimism possible to a historian is the hope that in the end the last word is to those who deserve it.

Could the Irish tragedy have been avoided? If it is in truth the law of humanity that only through pain can goodness and wisdom be acquired, then indeed there was no other way for Ireland than the one she has travelled.

SCOTLAND

CHAPTER I

Edinburgh

My arrival in Scotland was somewhat of a disappointment. I did not go by England, but first set foot in this country of lakes, moors, and ruins at Leith, the smoky port of Edinburgh. The steamer landed us at a wooden pier, where some drunken porters were loafing. They were all either very young or very old, but what I chiefly noticed was their general air of wretchedness, and their red-rimmed, drink-sodden eyelids, the lashes of which seemed to have been burnt off. They carried our luggage through the town to the station. Though it was a lovely summer's day, there seemed to be neither light nor gaiety in the streets. The traffic of the town, far from suggesting the hum of a hive of bees working in the sun, made one think of some gloomy factory. The dirty-looking buildings about one only bore

witness to the rather depressing side of modern industrial civilisation, and of the Anglo-Saxon spirit for organisation—they were all either stores, factories, or warehouses. On the station platform I was seized with a sense of oppression and homesickness. The railway lines begin at the foot of a sooty wall, and then wend their way through a dirty suburb. The eye seeks in vain for the touch of mystery which gives to the practical realities of departure something of the nature of a journey into the poetic unknown. Man here is too clearly the slave of industry—a serf along with the land itself, to this world of iron and railways with which the surrounding landscape is begrimed and disfigured. Absorbed in his work, he has not the time for idle curiosity about his fellow-beings, nor sufficient ease of life to experience casual sympathies. The hardships of existence have made him callous and indifferent.

Meanwhile our luggage was left on the platform, and, as is the custom in England, it was not registered. In this country of liberty and progress everybody has to look after oneself, and use one's own foresight and prevision. At last the train moved slowly into a dreary-

looking landscape consisting of dirty streets, rows of workmen's cottages, suburban stations, and factory chimney tops. Suddenly, at the side of a hill, we came upon a massive turreted fortress, flanked by a series of round towers. It was, I presumed, very old; but somehow its shining sandstone walls conveyed no impression of the poetry of ages. In reality the smoke of the trains had very imperfectly produced an air of antiquity. For I learnt next day that this building, which I, with an imagination haunted by stories of old Scottish history, had taken for a castle, was nothing but a modern built prison. We came out of Waverley Station through an underground passage lined with book-stalls, and sonorous with the noise of traffic overhead, to find ourselves in the very heart of Edinburgh. One could see the whole town, and the effect was confused, grandiose, and bizarre. To the left, wreathed in smoke and fog, the old town rises in a little cluster of indented gables, clock towers, and turrets—all the old-world architecture of its hilly streets being crowned by the triumphant massiveness of its castle, which looks like a legend in stone, tenaciously determined to lord it over modern life. It stands there as watchful-

looking as in the days when it was truly the city's great defence, though the rocky hill on which it is set, now ends sheer in the modern English gardens of Princes Street. These gardens, with their lawns and shrubberies and their flower-tower, set above the statue of Sir Walter Scott, lay immediately in front of me. To the right a row of handsome houses opposed the contrast of present luxury to former dignity, of British prosperity to the legendary glory and hardiness of old Scottish existence. Behind, as if some sacred mount, rises Calton Hill, a ruined acropolis scattered with fallen monuments,—an unfinished colonnade, a slender tower in honour of Nelson, a rotunda in memory of Dugald Stewart, and a little lower down, the monument of Robert Burns. All the complex charm of Edinburgh lay spread out before me. In this town, of which the two sides, separated by the railway, are so extraordinarily different, I could as yet distinguish neither details nor coherence. But I could just perceive the effort made to unite modern activity with past glory. Edinburgh lives saturated with the poetry of remembrances; everything she does is done with the consciousness of past traditions,

and even through the smoke of its very modern station and factories, one breathes in also the spirit of ancient history the very stones of Edinburgh seem to exhale.

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The evening of my arrival I was asked to a party, given by a cosmopolitan group of ladies in a students' residence, temporarily transformed during the vacation into a boarding house. The gathering was as informal as that of a Casino. Some young girls played the violin. A German doctor, with a fair beard and wearing large round spectacles, took out a minute notebook in which he had condensed the treasures of much native music, and went through them in an enthusiastic tone. Meanwhile I had time to examine the room. Our pitiable modern triviality was set in a frame of the fifteenth century. "One of our Kings slept here," a young girl explained to me. To get some refreshment I had to traverse a little courtyard. Windows placed irregularly in the grey and rose-touched walls bathed it in the same flickering light one gets from street lamps. A seat seemed waiting for familiar occupants, and I sat for a little while in this deserted and old-fashioned corner,

where Ancient Scotland seemed still to slumber around me.

Suddenly the sound of strident music burst forth above. A piper had just come in, stern as a priest and upright as a soldier, his pipes tucked under his left arm and his green ribbons fluttering; he was walking round the room to the piercing rhythm of his deafening music. Presently he stopped abruptly and commenced to play a reel. Four young women then tried to show us the national dance—a kind of wild and stamping quadrille, seen best when danced by youths in their kilts, bare knees, and a dagger stuck in one stocking. When I returned home through the deserted streets my ears were still ringing with the insistent notes of the bagpipes. Its shrill rhythm had quite driven out of mind all more ordinary music, and it seemed to me that the beauty of the walls and ceilings, and the picturesque originality of the little courtyard, had completely banished the evanescent occurrences of the evening.

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The sun woke me next morning. I ran to open my gothic-shaped window, which was high and narrow and set in very thick walls. In front of

me, at the end of a deserted street still soft with the mist of early morning, I could see the bristling heights of the castle looking like a thing asleep. From the distance I could only perceive the confused mass of the citadel enclosing in its ramparts the remains of palace, chapel, guard-house, and barracks. In front, a thick, crescent-shaped wall, pierced by holes, but destitute of guns, overlooked the esplanade. Once out of doors I climbed the hill of the old town, walking along High Street and Canongate. Lines were strung out of every window, from which linen and all kinds of coloured rags hung down to dry. Bare-legged children were crawling about the *closes*—long narrow alleys which run through the houses. I passed the old Tolbooth, formerly a prison and court of justice, which, with its projecting clock and two conical towers, is still the same as it was in the days of James VI., when Canongate formed an independent borough. Finally I got to Holyrood.

At the back, the palace is shut in by two dreary looking hills. Placed at their base it looks more like a manor house lost in some solitude than the palace of a king set at the entrance of his capital. A sentinel in a Highland uniform was

on guard, walking backwards and forwards as if he had still a king to watch over. And the effect of these bare hills and heavy towers, gloomy walls, and the Scottish soldier, made a picture so intensely historical and retrospective, that suddenly recalling Paris and its cheerful palaces, the serenity of France and its enchanting castles reflected in the Loire, I realised the shivering distress that must have shaken Mary Queen of Scots when she found herself captive in this solitary grandeur, shut in as it were between the hum of her capital and the silence of these barren heights.

The impression of the exterior is merely intensified as one gets inside. How far we are from a Fontainebleau or a St. Germain! No foreign influence has ever penetrated these walls. Not a breath of joyous art seems ever to have warmed the skies against which these towers are outlined. Not a hint of the voluptuous and gilded life of the Italian Courts has ever cheered this primitive interior, with its rough floors and oak-panelled chambers. We came to the portrait gallery, situated in that part of the palace built by Charles II. Its only dignity lies in its dimensions and its possession of one hundred and twenty

portraits of Scottish sovereigns,—from Fergus I. to the last of the Stuarts. The honest Dutch painter who executed the wholesale order for them, given by the Scottish Government, showed more conscientiousness than genius. He was commissioned to paint one hundred and ten canvases in two years at a price of £2 per canvas. He fulfilled his contract, but there was no art thrown in. The pictures are intended to recall all those who controlled the destinies of Scotland, or helped to make her history—whether they were called John Baliol, Robert Bruce, Macbeth, or Mary Stuart.

I lingered more especially in the old north-western tower, where Darnley's rooms and, above them, connected by a secret stairway, Mary Stuart's are to be seen. These contain the dressing-room, bedroom, and the little anti-chamber where the extraordinary sovereign was giving supper to a few intimates, when on Saturday the 9th of March 1568, about seven at night, the assassins of Rizzio entered and did their work. I also saw the audience-chamber with the large blood stain on the floor, popularly believed to be that of Mary's favourite. And so strong is the cult of the past at Holyrood

that nothing in this part of the palace, doubly sacred to Scottish fidelity, has ever been restored. The crimson damask bed-hangings, with their green silk fringe and tassels, are crumbling away. Their original colour is hardly discernible. But nothing could better recall a history whose truth is more tragic than any romance could be, than these faded and melancholy draperies. Modern Scotland holds Queen Mary in a veneration, due partly to pity for her misfortunes, partly to admiration for her beauty, and to sympathy for her weaknesses, but above all to a mysterious love for the old line of national princes of which she was a representative, as well as to pride for that long past history of which she is, as it were, the culminating poetry, the time-honoured touch of grace and loveliness. She symbolises for them the destiny of Scotland, both in her unequal struggles and in her final touching surrender.

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In the lowlands of Scotland the worst side of English life seems to be like so much scum that has overflowed from the larger country. For some days I felt quite lonely, everything seeming strange to me. The disagreeable impression of Leith returned and deepened. Every evening

I went out for a stroll in the crowded streets. The shop windows, though brilliantly lit, are very indifferently arranged. Every kind of eatable is heaped together — a Gargantuan medley of hams, sausages, and joints of beef; an assortment of heavy looking confectionery; inferior chocolate, various kinds of tobacco, fruits, and water-melons. All these things are displayed in a disorderly confusion, very bewildering to eyes accustomed to the strict tidiness and elegance of our French shop windows. Here it is difficult to know the difference between a pork-butcher's and a confectioner's. The fruit might as well be vegetables, and the tobacconist's might easily be mistaken for a grocer's. The eating-houses resemble taverns, and the drink shops are also purveyors of fried fish. An assortment of caps adorns the entrance to a tailor's, and it would be hazardous to suppose that a display of shirts necessarily implies a hosier's.

It is quite as difficult to identify the people themselves. The common children are all barefooted and very dirty, so that it is impossible to distinguish between the true street urchins and the children of respectable workmen. Many of the women are bareheaded. They may be

young girls returning home from the day's work, or honest housewives, or women of the streets. And the youths who speak to them, for all I know, may be either worthy apprentices or street loafers. Among the better classes the only ones I feel safe about are the clergymen and the robust Highlanders, and even the latter, though infantry, have the amazing habit of carrying a small cane, suggestive of cavalry.

In Canongate, all the doors of the *closes* are shut, but every doorway shelters a sentimental couple. It is necessary to walk carefully, for the road is full of zigzagging drunkards. Women, intoxicated with whisky, giggle, lurch, and fall in the road, while young girls in the same condition drag themselves along, with wild bewildered eyes and swollen faces.

I knocked against a huge creature, who, blocking the entrance of a hairdresser's shop, was haranguing the proprietor. The latter, quite unconcerned, continued his business, merely warning the man to move on. But the drunkard was obstinate, and suddenly the barber, putting aside his comb and scissors, hit him full in the face, and knocked him down with a single blow. Then he quietly put up his shutter, went back

into the shop, and shut the door. The whole incident only occupied a few seconds, and was done with a calm brutality, showing that such drastic measures were of every-day occurrence. Unfortunately, I came across a still sadder sight in the High Street. One of the good-looking soldiers that I had seen so smart and swagger a short time since, with his turned-down stockings, his tartan kilt, and white flannel jacket, was lying helpless in the mud. Two policemen handed him over to the patrol, who then moved slowly away, walking with rhythmic tread up the hill to the citadel.

Arrived home, I was for a moment in an awkward position. I had forgotten my latch-key, and the house was without a porter. I rang several times, to no purpose. A short distance away a policeman was watching me. His observation had commenced to make me feel uncomfortable, when, coming up to me, he saluted and said, "You have forgotten your key, sir?" Without waiting for an answer he took a latch-key from his pocket, opened the door, once more saluted, and walked away.

For the first time I was glad to be back in my own rooms, the silence of the things about me

was soothing after the sights and sounds of the streets outside. Slowly the impressions made by my Saturday night walk through Edinburgh began to take definite shape in my tired brain. Though still confused, they stood out as something curiously hostile and unpleasing. It seemed to me that the whole of the Anglo-Saxon life took definite shape in these two contrasts,—that of the moving mass of rowdy drunkards, and the reassuring, patient, reliable policeman.

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On the Sunday I was advised to attend the military service at the old St. Giles' Cathedral. Outside the building, the crowd, which has everywhere similar curiosities, was waiting to see the soldiers. The congregation was pouring in from every street with their books—Bible, Prayer-Book, and Church Hymnary—under their arms. Even the children carried them. Crowds were passing in through the open doors of the church. Suddenly the silence of the street was broken by the strident notes of the bagpipes and the flourish of a brass band. The magnificent regiment of the Gordon Highlanders was coming down Castle Hill. They were led by the pipers, who marched to the time of the wild and heroic

pibroch. They moved with heads erect, while the streaming ribbons of their bagpipes gave a touch of gaiety to their sombre uniforms—short kilts, green tunics, and glengarry caps. At a little distance behind came the whole regiment, headed by the band in full dress—scarlet tunic, tartan kilt and tartan plaid, fastened by a silver brooch on the shoulder, and wearing on their heads the Highland bonnet with the falling feathers, which cover one side of the face. Something ancient and barbaric clung to this disciplined and unarmed column, culminating in the extraordinary figure of a man walking in the front of the band and apparently directing it, much in the same fashion as the drum-major of our own regiments. A leopard skin fell before his knees; he walked with his chest thrown out, and carrying an enormous drum supported by straps from his shoulders. He was using the drum-sticks with an exaggerated action of both arms, whirling them above his head, and flinging them against the drum with the furious excitement of a maestro, who is marking time with every blow.

In accordance with the usual Presbyterian service there were lessons, hymns, prayers, and

a sermon. But I was never for a moment conscious, in this great nave, where the stained-glass windows flung such soft and fitful light, of the cold and rational atmosphere usually given by the Protestant service as conducted in its own unemotional buildings. Here the very gloom was religious. Centuries of Catholicism cling to the silence and glowing dimness of its vaulted arches. Consequently when the soldiers commenced to sing a hymn of valour and of faith, accompanied by the brass band and the stirring roll of the drum, I realised the full beauty of a present which does but continue the past, borrowing from it even its settings, just as in beautiful sites of ruins bygone history mingles with the vitality of living nature.

In truth it is impossible to ignore the skill with which Scotland of to-day has reconciled its many contradictions. This puritanical country seems to have forgotten the hostility between Knox and Mary Stuart. This moralising people takes no offence at the too passionate life of their famous Sovereign, and, canny and sober as they are, remain royalist to the core. At the same time, love of Queen Mary entails no hostility to the throne of Elizabeth. The

truth is, that in its wisdom Scotland prefers rather to inherit the advantages of the past than to curse and bewail it. They cherish bygone history because the whole of present conditions have been evolved from it, and because they realise that the long strivings of previous generations are the only real capital of a nation. They cling to traditions, knowing them to enfold all the great deeds of their ancestors, and realising also the truth that "humanity counts many more dead than living." England also has been wise enough to understand a sentiment she shares, and has been careful throughout not to offend the national passions of the country. Both people know so well that it is not necessary, in order to progress, to have been born yesterday, and that a nation has no need to repudiate its past as a means of building up a successful present; the existing generations, in fact, draw a curious strength from the knowledge that their ancestors have lived and laboured for so long, and so many lives have gone to the making of their own. To them the past is the fulcrum of the lever with which they hope to raise up prosperity in the future.

The national spirit is in consequence self-

conscious, introspective, and keenly aware of its own essentials. Look, for instance, at the book-sellers' windows. They contain practically nothing but views of Scotland, books on Scotland, histories of its various clans, accounts of its famous sights, and photographs of its great men—of all those who have taken part in the national destiny, or who have either dazzled or expressed the soul of this northern people. Robert Burns and Walter Scott are omnipresent, in every kind of edition, popular or expensive, suitable for a library or for carrying in one's pocket, condensed into one big volume or spread out into a series; and round them, like satellites, glowing with reflected glory, are the songs of minor poets, the output of romanticists, the volumes of historians —a whole world of truth and fancy, enclosing the life of a nation as the dome-shaped sky encloses the surface of a landscape.

CHAPTER II

The Scotland of Knox and Sir Walter Scott

Before travelling to the Highlands I went a number of excursions round about Edinburgh, all of which only increased and deepened the impressions made upon me by that enchanting city. The surrounding country is beautiful as a dream. In the great square of land which lies between the Highlands and England, Scotland seems to have concentrated all her forces, as if to unfold a mighty line of defence against the enemy. Both her past greatness and present well-being seem centred in these lowlands. In them her strength and her wealth appear to have found equal outlet. It is here also that her industrial and agricultural prosperity are at their highest, while the remains of her former military and religious achievements linger over it like a fragrance permeating the practicalities of modern life.

The climate being more mild, and the soil more fertile than in the Highlands, makes farming possible. We came upon ruins set in little cheerful fields and villages, recalling the landscapes of our own country. Abbeys and palaces are like threads carrying the dreams of past history into the peaceful woof of the present. The dismantled remains of Craigmillar lie in a hamlet still known by the name of Little France. Queen Mary had made the Castle one of her favourite residences, and her French bodyguard were lodged in the village. A little farther away, to the west of the capital, is the massive quadrangle of Linlithgow Castle, pierced high up by little windows which would give it the look of a prison were it not for some lingering touch of rugged dignity, which lightens them as by some invisible sunlight. This is the Versailles of Scotland. It resembles it in the same degree as Holyrood resembles the Louvre of the Valois. Mary Stuart was born within these massive walls in a room in the western wing, still pointed out to visitors. Farther away, at the head of the Forth, overlooking the straits on one side and the valley on the other, is Stirling, Edinburgh's counterpart, and a sort

of second capital of Scotland. An immense fortress looks down on the town, and crowns a steep and precipitous hill, over which it seems to keep guard. We entered it under a gloomy archway after crossing a lowered drawbridge. Inside the citadel is a delicious palace. From its ramparts I saw a Highlander on guard. It seemed as if nothing had changed for centuries, save that green and yellow plains replaced the field of Bannockburn. Opposite, on a wooded slope, stands the statue of Wallace, like a motionless sentinel guarding the honour of the city. In the distance one perceived the vague outlines of the Highlands, from which descended, as if from an almost inexhaustible supply, those stubborn defenders of independence (the heroes and martyrs of national Scottish life)—conquerors with Robert Bruce and conquered with Charles Edward.

The castle hill slopes gently towards the town. We came down it to the church, still called Greyfriars after its original founders. James VI. was crowned there on the 20th of August 1567. He was then thirteen months old, and was held in the arms of the Earl of Mar. Knox preached a sermon, and the Earls of Morton and Hume

took the oath of allegiance to the King; after which the Earl of Mar bore him back to his "nursery." To-day the tranquil life of the little town is still carried on against a background of the past. We saw the house of Argyll —an old mansion surrounded by the tiniest of courtyards. Though now used as a military hospital, it reminds one of our own Cluny. But here the small Renaissance façade is flanked at one end by a heavy feudal tower, and at the other by a pointed turret, which seems to issue from the roof itself. The Ducal arms are set in the stone above the entrance, but only convalescent soldiers stared at us out of the little windows with their sculptured pediments. I stopped for a moment in front of the Guild Hall, which looks like a stone chalet in possession of some great church clock. I should have liked to have passed some days in this old town, where the breath of history beats everywhere against one's face, and seems to lure the travellers to stay and penetrate the secret of its charm.

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But I was only there in passing, and had to continue on my way. We next went up the hill that faces the heights of Stirling, and acts

as a sort of pedestal to the monument erected in honour of Wallace. The heat of the day was over as we followed a dusty road bordered by fields and small houses. We passed the river Forth, which is crossed by an old arched bridge with pointed pyramids at the four corners. The heaped-up stones gathered round the base of the arches are covered with the ivy that clothes the bridge itself as with a carpet. At a little distance a handsome iron bridge has been erected for traffic. But the builders took good care not to demolish the older one which had served their ancestors for so long, and now reflects an image beautified by age, into the sombre waters below.

In front of us rose the wooded hillock, with its round tower on the top. As we drew nearer we got a better view of the boldness of its architecture, rising like so many stone needles against the clarity of the sky. Strange as the challenge of a burgrave, and triumphant as some Wagnerian legend, it bears witness to an epic heroism and achievement, and glorifies the military and religious greatness of the past. On one side is a narrow stone staircase; on the other,—overlooking the plain, and opposite to the statue of

Bruce erected in the square of Stirling, on the other side of the valley,—is an immense statue of Wallace rising from the ridge of the hill. Standing on a projecting pedestal, he is holding his sword rigidly upright, as if still to command and protect. His left hand rests upon a shield, the point of which touches the ground. He wears a coat of mail, and his cloak fastened across his chest and thrown back over the shoulders, shows a thin tunic clasped by a leather belt. The helmet without crest or visier gives a Roman look to the face. But above his head, half-hidden in the shadow of an overhanging pointed arch, is set the high crown of Scotland. I do not think anything could better express a nation's love and reverence than this monument, sprung as it were from the very soil opposite the famous fortress. Nor could anything be more impressive than this proximity of the two great warriors, separated only by the field of battle, upon which their valour brought salvation to the people of Scotland. Truly the Scots have the genius of veneration.

Another day, in squalls of rain and whirlwinds of dust, I went to see the little town of Haddington, the Haddington of Knox and Carlyle. It is

called the Lamp of the Lothians. The Reformer was born there, and I was shown the house in which his enthusiastic apologist lived. I leant over an old bridge, and gazed at the river which a carter was fording, and then went to see the big rose-coloured stone church, now little more than a ruin. A part of the nave is open to the sky; so is the square tower which rises from the centre of the building. The rest has been restored and is used for services, a touching example of the fashion in which this wise nation makes use of its old buildings, feeling that the present cannot be better set than the noble elements of its past.

It is not possible to walk a step in the country round about the Forth and in the counties of Stirling, Linlithgow, Edinburgh, Haddington, and Roxburgh without being enchanted by the magic of Scottish history, beautiful as a fairy story. Melrose, for instance, is a Gothic dream of beauty, immortalised in a bold and delicate stone structure. This delicious ruin is open to the sky, and one's eyes are arrested by nothing but the miracle of its columns, the lacey open work of its carvings, and the slender lines which culminate in the immense pointed archway of

the western window. It is not only time, however, that has played havoc with a beauty no outrages have been really able to efface. Built by David I., the abbey was soon after burnt by the English army. It was rebuilt by Robert Bruce, and again twice burnt. Its remains still bear witness to the secular struggle of which it was a victim, and are a fitting memorial to the glory that struggle recalls.

Dryburgh is a more complete ruin still. It consists of ivy-covered walls, the fragment of an old gable above a plain rose window, the remains of a cloister with Norman doorways, and finally, lonely looking as a tomb, a rather better preserved wing, square in shape, and lined with pointed arches, of which the upper portions have been torn away. Sir Walter Scott and his wife are buried there. And nowhere could he lie better than here in the heart of his own country, and close to the abbeys of Jedburgh and Kelso. For the first years of the great writer's life were spent just near here with his grandfather at Sandy-Knowe, where his grandmother and his Aunt Janet looked after him. From there he went to Kelso, where in an old garden the boy of thirteen read Percy's *Reliques* under the

shadow of an old plantain, and was so fascinated that he forgot his dinner. All that part of the country is now known as the land of Scott, just as south of Glasgow, the counties of Ayr and Lanark are called the land of Burns. Oh, faithful country, which honours its poets to the point of consecrating to their memory the districts they ennobled by their breath, and which seems to-day almost to owe the deepest part of its charm to the fact that formerly these same poets devoted all that was best in their genius to the commemoration of its greatness!

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This is in truth the Scotland of Walter Scott, the romantic Scotland of limpid water, green valleys, wooded hills, and beautiful ruins. The work of the great novelist has made it for ever living in our hearts, while its grace seems visibly summed up for us in the lovely dwelling he called his Romance in Stone. Among his works, Abbotsford should always be included, for it was, I firmly believe, his favourite of them all. No logical or pre-conceived idea can be discerned in it. This confused grouping round one main building of pavilions, archways, spires, pinnacles, balconies, and turrets, is all impulse and spontaneity.

Sir Walter Scott built up his house in the same way as he did his novels, just as his fancy and his desires drove him. He took his materials from old ruins, and, faithful to their spirit, merely grouped them afresh. The walls, both of the house and garden, are formed of sculptured stones gathered together from every part of Scotland. The old doorway of the Tolbooth of Edinburgh is placed at the western entrance, where it opens into an inner courtyard. At the other end is a doorway copied from the palace at Linlithgow. The carved oak panels and the ceiling of the hall come from Dunfermline Castle, while other details of its architecture are taken from Melrose and Roslin. All round it are the arms of the Douglases, the Scotts, the Kers, the Armstrongs, and other great frontier clans, who, as an old inscription puts it, "Kept in the old days the marches of Scotland for the king." Weapons, hunting horns, and antlers are everywhere. The place is like a sanctuary of the past, where Sir Walter Scott could feel his soul at home, much as a monk would feel it in the sanctuary of God. His one wish was to die there, and when they brought him back stricken with his last fatal illness, the failing mind could

realise only one idea—"I know now that I am at Abbotsford." It was to keep this dearly-loved homestead that he spent his old age in exhausting labours, just as to build and beautify it he had lavished all the wealth of his prosperous period. This property was the delight of his life. He loved the country round it, the scenes that had touched his imagination, the loveliness of the existing Scotland, and the poetry of the days that were gone. He cherished the whole scenery of his country, its history, its traditions, all that he had seen and known, and all that his impassioned heart had guessed concerning her. Abbotsford was the summing up of his imaginative passions. It was the dearest of all his works, because it was the embodiment of all that he loved best.

And love of Scotland is the keynote of his art. His imagination wandered first, endeared and melancholy, among the memories of the past. And then suddenly rose the desire to gather together and resuscitate all those scattered fragments of half-forgotten glory that in the limbo of history seemed to have been waiting for his advent. And his genius was all the more creative that it was also the verifying of many stored-up annals. It was his work, in fact, to

wrest from oblivion all the old life of Scotland, and to lay bare for all posterity its beauty and its truth.

No doubt Sir Walter Scott idealised the facts he used. But this very idealisation, perhaps because he drew it out of his own loyal heart-beats, was more full of truth than many surface accuracies. At anyrate, he satisfied the souls of those who, finding themselves reflected in his pages, made him the great spokesman of their nation. He became both their ideal and their model. Sir Walter Scott is, in fact, the spiritual father of Scotland. Through his writings he has made a treasure house for the past genius of his country, and in doing so both defined and preserved it.

Unless one has realised this it is impossible to understand the extraordinary cult felt for him. There have been greater poets, more scholarly novelists, authors of a finer literary quality, but no writer has been more typically national, and there are none whose works reflect more absolutely the soul of a people. Consequently it is not astonishing that his books have become part of history, and that the writer has been raised to the rank of national hero. It is the same with Robert Burns, though his passionately moving

poetry expresses fewer elements of the Scottish character. It is the case also with John Knox, as well as with the minor representatives, Thomas Reid, Dugald Stewart. It is its own immortal soul that Scotland loves in their genius, and which it cherishes in its great historical personages. National life no longer exists, save in this passionate attachment to the true spirit of the race. Through its great men Scotland feels the essence of its autonomy preserved, and no union with England can touch the halo which surrounds them. Faithful to her new destiny, however, as well as to her former glory, Scotland maintains her national loyalism by this cult of her national heroes. Nowhere is the religion of homage better understood than in this country, in which it acts truly as salvation. And once having realised this, one is no longer astonished at the impassioned expression of its gospel, which finds utterance in the fiery writings of Thomas Carlyle.

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On other excursions I saw the wild coast and shores of Scotland. I remember clearly the little fishing villages at the edge of the county of Fife, which the Scots call "a grey mantle with a fringe of gold." In their oilskins, with

their short beards and tanned faces, the fishermen reminded me of our own Breton sailors. Their dialect had the same gutteral intonation, and, looking through the little windows blocked up with flowers, I saw the same small shining tables, and white curtains starched with too much blue. The housewives were preparing the evening meal. There was no appearance of misery, but of that strenuous life which is everywhere the same when men come to harden themselves by contest with the eternal callousness of the sea. And suddenly I knew the melancholy felt by all travellers, who "recognise under many guises the immutable sorrows of the old Adam."[1]

We followed the coast, where innumerable fragments of former abbeys and fortresses still stand among the rocks and little islands. From these we went by boat from Aberdour to the Isle of Inchcolm. Square towers, crumbling walls, and poverty-stricken farm are all that remain of the old superb monastery of St. Columba, the Irish missionary who journeyed over to evangelise Scotland. How silent and how lonely it looked, the night we saw it! Here, as in the little town of Stirling, and among

[1] André Bellessort, *La Jeune Amerique.*

the ruins of Melrose and Dryburgh, there was the sense of a country that "has been." The present seems only to survive in order to reflect past greatness, and the peaceful activities of modern life to take place only that some little of the energies of the glorious days, still faintly glowing in the battered arms treasured by each homestead, may survive among the things of eternal and changeless beauty. The present simplicity of Scottish life is all that is necessary to give humanness to the old ruins and the sense of reality to bygone things. These living creatures make the soul of the past very near and vivid, and save it from the deadness that hangs about the treasures of a museum, which, detached from their original human associations, seem no longer to have any. In this country the present can never be seized by the sorry illusion that it exists by itself and independently of previous efforts. On the contrary, nowhere is the solidarity of time more recognised, nowhere are the links that bind and uphold the present more cherished and acknowledged. The past is Scotland's religion, and no religion, after that which men yield to God, expresses a truer greatness.

CHAPTER III

In the Highlands (Nature and the Home)

At last I reached the Highlands. From the train, which ran along the coast of Fife, I saw fields of golden corn shining in the August sun. I then passed out of the county and crossed the Forth of Tay over a bridge nearly 2000 yards in length. At Dundee we simply went from one station to the other through a town crowded and beflagged for some princely visit. A few minutes later we got out at Lochee. My host's property was situated close to the railway, a little way from the town. We had only to cross the lines to get to the Park. The house, set in lawns and gravelled walks, is a simple building of grey stone, with projecting balconies and verandahs, and pale green shutters. Of my first evening I have retained only an impression of gentleness and peace. After dinner we went

for a walk. The long twilight of Scotland lengthened a day that seemed reluctant to be done. The moon rising at first orange-coloured behind a line of sombre clouds, slowly emerged and paled. Gradually the stars were lit in the heavens. We came back under a sky like velvet, blue, silent, and pure. In this unknown country everything at such an hour becomes mysterious, In the distance I could see the lights of some town or village. We walked along a wide road between the fields. A fresh breeze blew about us. Imagination was undisturbed by any hint of wildness, and seemed bathed in the dignified peace of spaciousness and slumber. We were in the fertile and smiling part of Scotland, but also, for the moment, in a Scotland asleep, whose restful darkness poured into one's being a delicious oblivion of cares and weariness, in order that the soul itself might escape with greater imaginative freedom.

On Sunday morning we went to the Catholic church at Lochee. In this country, where the Reformation has banished the beautiful word "Universal," it is called the "Roman Church." The various members of the house party went to different Presbyterian churches, for there are

many of them, and Scottish people are very attached to their own chapel and to their own minister. While waiting for service, I walked about the little town. All the shops were shut. In the clean streets one only met church-goers carrying their Bibles and the Church Hymnary. Inside the church I had the comforting sensation a traveller feels when he sets foot, far from the land of his birth, on board a ship of his own nationality—to him like a floating fragment of his distant country. Here everything was familiar to me, and seemed to annihilate intervening space. The priest standing at the foot of the altar, the choir boys, the incense, the Latin prayers, and the sacred service which is always the same,—changeless among all the differences of race, language, and customs,—symbolised more clearly for me than ever the real universality of the Catholic faith, and of the communion of souls she draws together regardless of all ephemeral differences and all the varied settings of human life.

I spent the afternoon talking to my host in the silent quietude of his library. He had given me a history of Dundee to look at, illustrated with many past relics and monuments, as well

as with pictures of those which the zealous care of the townspeople preserves with so much piety. It was the same cult of the past which I had found at the mouth of the Tay and the Forth—upon the threshold of the Highlands as in the glorious marches of the Lowlands. While I glanced through the volume my host read some verses from the Bible. "It is a good book," he said to me, "good for all, and its universal diffusion is a very precious blessing. It has done much for Scotland." I looked at his thoughtful countenance, which a restrained fervour made both energetic and gentle. He reminded me of Knox, only a Knox appeased and softened. This quiet Scotsman of to-day, with his serious wisdom, his patience, piety, and grave optimism, seemed to me like some tranquil descendant of the old Reformer. He represented the puritanism of Scotland, which, since John Knox, seems to have rested quietly in the harmonious agreement which exists between its faith and daily conduct.

At the same time my mind was far too full of the glory of the past to receive the erroneous impression of Scotland as a land of savages into which the Reformation had poured the first rays

of sunlight. Solid denials to this illusion are too frequent, both in its abbeys—where the art of the Middle Ages seems to have expended itself in miracles—and in the battlefields, whose names alone call up visions of an epic heroism. Few countries have been greater than this little kingdom of Scotland, remote though it was from the heart of civilised Europe, and engrossed as it had to be in the virile business of defending itself. Its antique ballads bear witness to considerable poetic culture, and the Stuarts are famous among royal dynasties. It is true that feudalism was more aggressive and warlike here than elsewhere, chiefly because the nature of the country favoured the sharp division of clans. For a long time the people knew no other organisation than that of its armed bands. A day came for it, as for the others, and much at the same time, when the centralising idea of monarchy shaped it into a state. But the state was undoubtedly associated too closely with the personality of the sovereign. And at this crucial moment, unfortunately, this sovereign happened to be a queen, young, and brought up between the Guises and Valois, at the Court of France. To her own people she seemed a despotic and

whimsical stranger. Her beauty incited the courage of some, but the majority were merely stimulated by her weakness into intrigue and petty rivalries. Too many passions became rampant for a storm not to follow. One idea alone remained fixed and clear above the chaos—that of religion.

Knox made religion and national sentiment one; he identified religious reform with the movement for Scottish liberty and independence. From that time onwards the spirit of Scotland entered into the path traced out for it by the rude eloquence and indomitable courage of its famous preacher.

It does not make a man greater to distort historical facts concerning him. The figure of Knox, indeed, seemed to me to become more real and comprehensible when I had once realised it in connection with the moving incidents of the period in which he lived, and had grasped it as the outcome of an inevitable national destiny. It is wrong to say that he gave a soul to Scotland; it was rather Scotland who lent its soul to him, and through this incarnation made him a hero. The harsh theology of the Calvinistic controversies, with its dogmatic reasonings, gives way here to

practical realities of conduct. Carlyle calls German Protestantism "not a religion or faith, but rather now a theological jangling of argument, the proper seat of it not the heart; the essence of it sceptical contention: which indeed has jangled more and more, down to Voltaireism itself—through Gustavus-Adolphus contentions onward to French Revolution ones!"

Knox had something better to do than to organise arrogant dialectics. In the circumstances in which he was placed by history he represented the nation and the cause of Scotland. "Knox was the constitutional opposition-party in Scotland; the Nobles of the country called by their station to take that part, were not found in it; Knox had to go or no one. The hapless Queen:—but the still more hapless country if *she* were more happy!" He was in a national crisis the hero of the people. "A man who did not wish to see the land of his birth made a hunting-field for intriguing, ambitious Guises." The land of his birth! It was from her that he received his strength and the unflinching conviction of his call. "Who are you," Mary Stuart asked him one day, "that you should presume to school the nobles and sovereign of this realm?" "Madam,

a subject born within the same," answered he. Yes, he was "born within the same"; and more than once during my stay I seemed to feel what was best in him still vital in the people I came in contact with. For it was the soul itself of Scotland, at once national and religious, to which religion, driven by the vicissitudes of history, adapted itself,—the vicissitudes of history themselves being, after all, perhaps only the inevitable working out of a nation's tendencies. Certainly the country has changed very little since that time, when its modern personality may be said to have first come into existence. Also Knox remains one of the strongest representatives of the national temperament. It is not surprising, therefore, that Scotland who made him seems his work. The stamp of the Reformer is still upon the souls of the country and the race. Had I not before me a representative of his very person on this rather idle and dreary afternoon, when my host's devotional reading encouraged wandering fancies?

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The next morning we regretfully left our hosts, to continue our journey through the Highlands; and that evening found us at a

perfect paradise of green, icy waters, ravines and valleys, where a moving sea of leaves fell upon the silent lawns of mansions and villas. This is the lonely part of Scotland, whose wooded heights are tremulous like waves before they fall into gloomy gorges. It is the region of weeping willows, cascades, woods and water, of murmuring capricious rivulets, which is situated to the north of Perth and at the entrance of the forest of Athol, by which the counties of Aberdeen and Inverness are separated. We got out of the train at Blair Athol. On the platform Mrs. B——, very simply dressed in black, was waiting for us. She had chosen this station, which was some distance from the house, in order that we might drive along the famous road which overlooks the pass of Killiecrankie.

At Fincastle, set in an enormous park, we came upon two picturesque-looking houses, one at the entrance, and the other a little higher up, in the middle of sloping lawns. As we passed the first, Mrs. B—— said to me, "This is where you are going to sleep. You can write here at a table where Browning composed one of his poems."

When I entered the dining-room for dinner that night, Mrs. B—— was transfigured. She had

on her head a floating white cap, and round her neck a large gold necklace. She wore a black dress with a long train, and the white veil on her head, thrown back off the face, fell to the waist at the back. She looked like one of the châtelaines of Sir Walter Scott's romances, set in a castle where the Stuarts might have slept. The tall lamps glowing in the corners of the room, the square table with its three-branched silver candlestick, its massive silver plate, and embroidered silk centrepiece, — all the austere luxury and ceremoniousness in which these people moved so naturally and so gracefully, created the illusion of a semi-royal condition, of an old aristocracy with its traditions still intact and gracious.

At ten o'clock Mrs. B—— rang. A long file of servants entered the room. They were all dressed in black, with the sharp contrast of white aprons and dainty white caps. They sat bolt upright upon chairs ranged along the wall. One of them placed a chair and a small table in the middle of the room. Mrs. B——, with her Bible in her hand, gravely sat down and read a few verses. She then knelt, followed by all the servants, with their faces to the wall.

Having said the Lord's Prayer, she got up, the servants disappeared, and we in our turn said good-night.

A storm had arisen, and large drops of rain pattered off the leaves. As I stood before the hall door, looking out upon the darkness of the park, Mrs. B—— became anxious as to whether I could find my way back, and begged me to wait a minute. I thought she was going to send one of the servants to escort me. But she came back wrapped up in a long cloak, and with wooden "pattens" over her evening shoes. "I'll take you back myself," she said; "I do so love going out at night when it is dark and raining." And Mrs. B——, in her evening dress, with her white cap and her large gold necklace, preceded me along the drenched pathways, which I myself could not even see.

At midnight I was sitting before Robert Browning's table. I went to my window, and could just perceive a mountainous landscape rising through the darkness. The lamplight in my room flung its halo into the courtyard, and the old house asleep at the foot of these misty heights, with its low frontage and irregular wings, and the rough carvings round its little windows,

made one think of the manor-house of some old Scottish laird. No better culmination could have been found to my impressions of the last few days. They became condensed in a picture of simple, distinguished, proud, and independent existence, saturated with the gentle unconventionality that solitude instils into the soul, as if to preserve its purity. Only under these conditions can certain virtues have birth in one. I understood then Scotland's fidelity to its traditions—its religious fervency and its freedom from so many forms of vanity and covetousness. The idealism of centuries is still like a fragrance penetrating all its modern civilisation.

I felt this delicious atmosphere peculiarly when staying with Mrs. B——. Rested by a night of freshness and silence, I crossed the sunlit park next morning, and found the family waiting for breakfast. The morning light streamed in through the open windows. The eldest of the young girls sat down at the piano, and her mother chose a hymn for her to sing. It was a song of praise to God, who had made the mornings so beautiful and our hearts so glad. The words were by a poet, the music most certainly by a musician, and as I listened it seemed to me as

if the beauty of the morning was being glorified by a soul itself as young and beautiful.

Apparently it is the custom in Scotland for the servants not to wait at table during breakfast. Everything is got ready and laid beforehand. The children having eaten their porridge and some fish or an egg, attend informally to the wants of their elders. An old patriarchal simplicity lingers in this custom. Scottish luxury seems to enrich life without transforming it. It is like a surface decoration only, and could be taken away without removing anything but a little opulence. The young girls handed us tea, bread and butter, cold meat, and scones. Their charming manners gave to the commencement of the day the atmosphere of a little festival. Then they took us for a walk through the park to some quiet lakes, strewn with fallen leaves. The sloping banks were covered with pink and purple heather, and seemed, with the added grace given them by the presence of these young creatures, to typify the whole scenery of Scotland. Here Nature appears, with an incomparable dignity, to do the honours of the country for the guests who visit it.

In the afternoon we drove to have tea at one of

Mrs. B——'s farms, the servants being sent on beforehand to get it ready. The farmer's wife received "her lady," and then disappeared; but though she had done nothing, Mrs. B—— insisted upon sending for her and thanking her for having lent us the sitting-room. This politeness, which I so often noticed, had nothing merely conventional. A religious feeling unites all classes, and I have never seen more willing or more perfect domestic attendance than that of these servants, to whom their mistress said simply, "Don't you think it is time the carriage was ordered?" "I think you might bring in the coffee now."

Leaving Blair Athol, we then crossed the central part of the Highlands. Here there is absolute desolation — miles and miles without a village. And this is the least wild and least lonely part of the country, since the railway runs through it. In other parts it seems one could walk for three days and not come across a house at all. Our train went slowly through purple-looking mountains, melancholy with mists. Now and again a waterfall dashes down a steep ravine. It is here, in these wild and heather-covered glens, that one should hear the

strident pibroch of the Highlanders. It became easy in such surroundings to understand both the race's hardiness and its relinquishment of the things that had gone to form its old chivalrous period—also the curious mixture of religious fervour and philosophical practicality which characterises it. Under a soft and benignant sky man is content merely to live,—where Nature is inclement and aggressive the problem of organising existence becomes imperative. Scottish philosophy has never lost contact with reality. It is essentially the doctrine of common sense, and Scottish theology must, above all, fit in with this double necessity of thought and conduct. Every Scottish peasant is a theologian in disguise. And the general taste for argument must have greatly favoured the success of the Puritan reformation, which an ardent desire to live rightly saved from degenerating into pure and simple rationalism.

I had reached the farthest point of my journey —the Highlands of the West. Here, before a sea hidden in mists, we came upon broken promontories, rugged cliffs, and a projecting vanguard of rocks, between which the sea, grown suddenly calm, glides like a peaceful river. The train

which had brought me from Inverness went on to the coast, and suddenly—like the petrified dream of some gigantic Ossian—I came upon a world of rocks and waters, grandiose as the beginnings of a world, but desolate as the débris of a deluge. We went along the indented coast, where the line runs in and out at the foot of a steep slope—the green slope of Scotland falling into the sea. There was the sound of rushing waterfalls, a confusion of ferns and plants, the freshness of leaves and dew—all the grace of the country coming apparently to end in these wild fiords, whose raucous name of *loch* is like the last cry of humanity flung upon the confines of the world.

In the middle of such chaos man must either have died out, or have brought all his virility into play. A good deal of the endurance of the Scottish temperament must surely have sprung from the rudeness of its soil, just as its invincible need of order must have arisen through the law of contrast. This order it tried in vain to achieve in its political existence. Having failed, it concentrated its energies for the future in enforcing it in private life. That it has succeeded in the latter endeavour no one could doubt for

a moment who has once been admitted into the intimacy of family life, disciplined as it is by a deep but not rigid puritanism — the jovial puritanism of a Knox rather than the depressing Protestantism of a Calvin. I say *jovial* intentionally. It beams in every countenance, and made me think of the little cask of burgundy Carlyle smilingly unearthed for us in the cellars of the stern theologian. The hospitality of Scotland has something of its flavour, as well as a little of its contagious cheerfulness. One could not but admire the sanity of the country's outlook, the rather heavy dignity of its life, and the great worthiness that underlies its good-natured cordiality. I shall always remember a sentence I heard spoken in the mountainous Isle of Skye. I was congratulating a mother upon the education she had given her seven children, when she answered simply, "I have tried to make them independent of all circumstances, but at the service of all men."

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It came to me, as I grew gradually to understand the soul of Scotland, that it was in some ways curiously akin to our own, and the sensation of this similitude became at times amazingly

sharp and vivid. In the old palace of Holyrood, where our kings and those of Scotland exchanged "the grave and melancholy hospitality"[1] which is given and returned between Stuarts and Bourbons, the spirit of the place held nothing unfamiliar to me. And this feeling became intensified among the ruins from which a past Catholicism exhaled like incense into the evening air. The soul of Scotland, however, resembles ours much in the same fashion as the dog rose of the hedges resembles the rose of a royal garden. It differs from it much as the skies and landscapes of the two countries differ one from the other. The surging of the sea against the uneven coasts, the mist-veiled quietude of its pastures, the melancholy beauty of its purple moors, and the fog-shrouded frontier of its northern shores, have hardened and saddened a people among whom, nevertheless, one can still discern, under a ruder surface, the graciousness, the idealism, and the courtesy of France. History has further accentuated the differences. The great business of Scottish heroism was to preserve its independence. Only her indomitable tenacity kept her a nation. The Robert Bruces

[1] Victor Hugo.

and the Wallaces of Scotland maintained the rights of their country by a military heroism which our own Joyeuse would have bowed down to. The Scottish Unicorn at Bannockburn drove back the same banner that Jeanne d'Arc beat down at Orleans, and it is surely not wholly an illusion to feel that the race bred for centuries in dreams and fighting at one extremity of Great Britain, welcomed to its grim landscape and uncertain skies the so-called chimeras thrust forth from the redoubtable empire of the Angles. A witty Frenchman, who knows Great Britain well, said to me one day, "If geography had only been reasonable, it would have turned the island round, so as to let Scotland come opposite to France."

When, on my homeward journey, I stopped at Glasgow, to take the express to London, the striking influence of English civilisation, which will one day end, perhaps, by changing the face of the old kingdom as well as conquering it, made it impossible any longer to recognise that one was still in the country of rebel mountaineers —of Queen Mary and Sir Walter Scott. But the picture of this impressive country obsessed my thoughts, and it faded from me only when,

with the paling of the stars in the tremulous whiteness of dawn, I saw, as I shivered on the deck of the steamer, the vague and blue-grey outlines of the coast of France rising upon the distant horizon.

WALES

MUCH as the bows of a sinking ship, the mountains of Wales became the last refuge of the lords of Britain after the shipwreck of their sovereignty.

My journey to Scotland had filled me with desire to visit this other sanctuary of past heroism, and to study a race so closely allied to our own Bretons. I should no doubt have been quite content merely to observe their present life and to have roughly associated it with the impressions and memories of the past called up by the old ruins, had I not, when passing through Oxford, had the good fortune to be introduced to Professor Rhys, Principal of Jesus College, and the greatest Celtic authority in the University. In collaboration with Mr. David Brynmor-Jones, he had just published a very scholarly work on the Welsh people. This book, with its ethnographical, philological, and historical research, led me—through labyrinths at times obscure and intricate enough—to an acquaintance with

the long story of the Celtic nation. And having followed the sequence of its tragic events, when I got to the country I found my knowledge of its past history not only add the subtle breath of life to all I saw, but made it easy to understand how inevitable were the laws which had governed the unhappy destiny of the Cambrian people.

CHAPTER I

The Old Counties of "Gwynedd"—The English and the Welsh

It was almost evening when, not far from Chester, we crossed the border and passed into Wales. And the change in the appearance of the scenery, grown suddenly wild and melancholy, fitted in with the gloom of the declining day. Its desolation announced the nearness of the northern coast and the approach of the mountain district, whose barren slopes fling off fragments into the sea below. Trees here are weakly and rare, and the meadows pass frequently into marshy wastes. There is nothing to remind one any longer of the opulent plains of Warwickshire. The large farmhouses, with their pointed gables and little tiled towers, are replaced by narrow houses and poverty-stricken villages The dwelling of the Welsh tenant has cer-

tainly very little likeness to that of the English farmer.

The train I was travelling by skirted the estuary of the Dee, and then followed the line of the coast itself. Here are the seaside resorts of the Irish Sea—Prestatyn, Rhyl, Abergele, and Colwyn Bay. They consist of huge stretches of fine sand, in front of which English enterprise has introduced a long asphalt promenade, a row of electric lamps, and a Pavilion or Concert Hall, generally a dirty polychrome, and looking like the remains of a Chicago Exhibition left in payment of debt. The coast ends towards the north in a little promontory—Llandudno—where we proposed to stay.

It was dark when we got there, and in the little town, shorn now of summer tourists, a high wind was making every gas lamp flicker. I found the streets too wide and too straight. The houses were all joined together, and all absolutely uniform. Solitude and draughts fronted me everywhere. I thought regretfully of the picturesque towns of former days, where the traveller could wander along narrow, winding streets under houses jutting hospitably forward one towards the other, and where cheerful

hostelries glowed with light at every turn. We were looking for lodgings. The hotels were a long way from the station, near the sea front, and had, besides, been closed at the end of the season. I wanted also to be in the house of a Welshman. In one of the little business streets, where so many of the houses were either grocers or headed "Refreshment Rooms," cards with *Apartments* were stuck above nearly every doorway. I stopped when I came to the name Owen, sure then that I should have to deal with a native.

I could not have asked for a better landlord. His eagerness, his politeness, and his intense desire to be obliging, were a welcome in themselves. He gave me the best room in the house, which was very good, set apart the drawing-room for my meals, and only appeared disturbed when I began to speak about dinner. "'Tis Wednesday," he remarked. As I looked at him rather blankly, he repeated, "'Tis Wednesday." "I quite understand," I answered; "but why should I go without dinner because of that?" He then explained that all the shops had been closed since one o'clock. Leaving me to consult with his wife, he presently returned with an

infinitely relieved expression—as of a man well out of a nasty dilemma. The couple had decided to yield me their own evening meal, as the only way of procuring me one.

In the cosiness of my little sitting-room, I was conscious even more strongly than on my arrival of a kindly hospitality. That they should try and make a lodger comfortable was natural, but there was a kindliness in the effort which since I left Calais I had become unaccustomed to in business relations. In English hotels the law of exchange acts as a purely mechanical and impersonal arrangement. They give you a room, and you give them money—what need for amenities is there in that? The good Welshman, however, takes his pleasure in knowing that his visitors are also happy and comfortable. He puts, as it were, heart into the business. Among certain races, faces smile readily at one another, and among these races Wales must certainly be included. Outside, the storm was raging. It rattled the windows until they shook, as if under the stress of some persistent assault. And all the time I could hear the roaring of the sea upon the shore.

Early next morning I went out to explore the

town. Llandudno is one of the *seaside resorts* so much praised in the illustrated guide-books. It is like all English seaside places—monotonous, new, and expressionless, with too many shops, too many houses to let, and too many churches. These belong to every possible denomination, but more especially to the Methodists. They are generally rather ugly—spurious churches, comfortable but bare, and destitute of either dignity or beauty. There is a lectern for the Bible, but no altar for the cross. The grace of silence is persistently destroyed in them by readings and discourses. Nothing encourages the charm of mystery—there are no stained-glass windows, no choir, no communion table. Reverence is purely unemotional, and I thought in them of Victor Hugo's lines—

> "C'était une humble église au cintre surbaissé,
> L'église où nous entrâmes,
> Où depuis trois cents ans avaient déjà passé
> Et pleuré bien des âmes . . ."

I went down to the shore. It consists of an immense bay with a promontory at each end—on the east the undulating promontory of Little Orme's Head, and on the other side Great Orme's

Head, a mountainous mass commanding the whole coast, and tumbling, as it were, headlong into the sea. One can go right round it from the Marine Drive, and get a beautiful view of the open sea. Regardless of the wind, I followed the road along it. The sun, piercing through a cloudy sky, turned the sea alternately green, slate-colour, and mauve, with scintillating flashes of silver. Away to the west lay Anglesey and Ireland, and to the north the Highlands of Scotland, the fabulous home of the ancient king of the British Isles, of whom the poems of Ossian are full. I was in the heart of the Celtic world, among a race impossible to annihilate, and passionately zealous of the legendary greatness of the past—a greatness, however, they had not always known how to handle for the best when they possessed it. What traces of it could one still find, I asked myself, as I walked away from a town in which every vestige of it had disappeared, into a landscape which was as if steeped in remembrances of ancient history.

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All the English watering-places along the coast are alike. They no more convey the idea of a Welsh village than Paramé does of a Breton

one, or Houlgate or Cabourg of a town in Normandy. The unconscious stamp of the inhabitants' tastes and habits time so soon traces upon the surface of a town is always absent from these seaside pleasure resorts. For individuality one must go to the old counties of Gwynedd, Carnarvon, and Merioneth—mediocre towns, whose destiny has been a quiet evolution of ordinary routine and daily labour. Towns such as these—and Dolgelly, Portmadoc, and Pwlheli are examples of what I mean — are neither sanctuaries of past history nor centres of living industry: they are not even cross-roads for tourists, under which circumstances a place frequently grows rich by the exploitation of its own beauties. The guide-books only mention them for the excursions to be made in their neighbourhood, and the hurried visitor, rushing on to the surrounding attractions, finds them totally uninteresting. But to the traveller more absorbed in humanity than sight-seeing, their placid plebeianism is full of valuable information. Mixing with the crowds in the streets and before the shop windows, he dimly learns the conditions of their present life, and realises its inevitable sequence from the habits of the past. All the

former destiny of the Welsh people is reflected in the places in which they live—in their gestures and their faces. Both the greatness and the failure are laid equally bare in them.

Here one is very far from the serenity of the little English towns, such as Stratford, Warwick, and Chester, which I had visited on my way. In these, comfort and well-being—set in surroundings made beautiful by long centuries of prosperity—seem to have become second nature. With a wise conservatism, moreover, and a deep gratitude for the heritages left by the past, everybody appears of one mind to add continually to the comfortable comeliness of their little native towns. Round them lie rich meadowland, rivers, and beautiful trees. A square belfry gives just the last touch of needful dignity to the scene, and brings to mind a vision of carved choir stalls and a white surpliced vicar reading the Protestant service every evening.

In Wales the conditions of life have been obviously less propitious. Nothing attracts or arrests one. Not a single building breathes of ancient history. There is no architecture. The churches are hybrid-looking things—between an Exchange and a lecture hall. Existing in great

numbers, and belonging to every kind of Nonconformist denomination, — Baptist, Congregationalist, Methodist,—they express the religious needs of the people in an age of cold conscientiousness, of disunited independence, and of unimaginative reasonableness. The streets, the houses, and the natives all suggest generations of dull mediocrity. No feeling either for comfort or for plastic beauty seems to stir in their souls. They require very little, have no delicate refinements of taste, and remain indifferent not only to luxury but to comfort. Nevertheless, this apathy towards physical well-being has its idealistic element, and among these generous, attentive Welshmen I felt as much at home as with our own people of Brittany. They have the same cordiality, the same desire to please. In one of the little hotels at which I stayed, the proprietor invited me pleasantly into his own room to drink a glass of pink-looking liquor. He first made me admire its pretty transparency, holding the glass on a level with one eye as he did so. He then confided to me that it was his wife's own brew, and finally drank my health in it, saying, "We are a little bit of the same family. Your Bretons are our

brothers." In another place, I went into the shop of my landlord to say good-bye before leaving. He filled a large bag of chocolates from the counter. "For the lady," he said graciously. "For the lady"?—these are our own ways of doing business.

From trifles such as these, as well as by their faces and manners, I could always distinguish between the Welsh and English. In addition, neither would have been pleased to be mistaken for the other; for if they have only one political existence they have two widely different temperaments, and the degree of sympathy and good-will existing between them is very small. The most insignificant native looks upon himself as infinitely superior to the English Prime Minister, and as belonging to a greater and nobler race than "this aristocracy of yesterday, the issue of bastards, adventurers, and assassins." On the other hand, the English struck me as looking down upon the Welsh—so different from themselves—and as taking pleasure in belittling them. They speak of the latter as vain, untruthful, blundering, and totally wanting in the finer instincts of life. The differences between the two become more marked as one goes into

the country places, where antagonism of language and feeling is sharpened by the divergence between the conditions of the two populations. There is no bond here uniting owner and tenant, not even the gradual sympathy that springs up through the possession of common interests and a common way of life. The peasant, whom neither conquest nor changes could uproot from his native soil, lived for centuries too far removed from any great centre to be influenced by political movements. The outside domination had come too late for him to prove malleable, and to this day he has never really submitted to it. I had not been eight days in North Wales before a sense of conflict became my predominating impression. And as other views gradually co-ordinated themselves with this, I began to understand the part these two hostile forces had taken in each other's lives in the past, the point they had now reached, and the issue suggested by the present state of the position between them.

CHAPTER II

Wales and the Conquest

One is constantly hearing of the 126 castles of Wales, and in truth never was a country crushed under the weight of such a number of fortresses. They met my eyes everywhere—some guarding the coasts, some the estuaries, some the passes, as for instance Harlech on a steep cliff overlooking the sea, Beaumaris on its own island, and Conway and Carnarvon, two huge structures erected by a certain Henry de Elreton, whose genius was only equalled by his power, until the latter, swollen at last to dangerous proportions, was checked by his royal master.

When the Conquest of 1282 had reduced the last independent principality, the annexation of Gwynedd finally brought to an end the Cambrian supremacy, to which Great Britain, as her name bears witness, had so long been sub-

missive. The ancestors of the Welsh dynasty had reigned over a confederation of British tribes, who after the departure of the Romans had joined together to resist the Anglo-Saxon invasion. From Cuneda to Cadwaledr the history of the monarchy is enveloped in the mystery of legend. Then the Cymrics were relegated to the western part of the island, called after them Cambria. The red dragon had retreated before the white dragon of the Hengists and Horsas. But in the territory to which they had withdrawn they retained their nationality intact, and for four centuries they remained free, unquiet and independent, bound together in an invincible solidarity, though torn perpetually by internecine dissensions. They were, in fact, as incapable of forgetting their own bonds of fraternity as of getting any political order into their existence. Their only masters were the patriarchal heads of the clans. At the same time they welcomed with open arms any of their own race whom misfortune drove over the border into the shelter of marshes and mountains. With much against them, they were happy enough, in the engrossment of their feuds, their dreams, and their poetry. Unfortunately, though always

ready to defend themselves, they were quite incapable of settled order, and as a self-governing country Wales soon ceased to exist. Her national independence, nevertheless, remained untouched. Personality seemed the one thing she was able to safeguard through every kind of vicissitude.

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Then came the Norman Conquest. The army which had conquered the Anglo-Saxons was not likely to stop at the Dyke of Offa. William and his successors subsidised the leaders of bands established in the Western provinces with "license to conquer Wales." Towards 1070, also, a Norman chief, Baldwin, erected the first of the fortresses with which the new masters of England were to strew the soil of Cambria. It was the primary link in a chain forged to bind the country to the rule of the Lord Marchers. A new period was beginning in the history of Wales —a period destined to last for over two centuries. The Anglo-Norman authority bit every day deeper into the territory from which it snatched such magnificent slices—Brecknock, Glamorgan, Pembroke. The conquering nobles were, besides, sovereigns within their own territory. If nominally representatives only of the king of England,

their rights invested them with powers constituting in practice an intolerable tyranny. Twelfth-century historians said of the Earl of Shrewsbury that "he had torn the Welsh with nails of iron." This Robert de Bellesme merely acted in the same fashion as Robert de Maupas, Robert de Rhudlan, Hughes Le Loup, and many others. One can easily understand consequently that the Welsh entered with enthusiasm into the great scheme of the Saxons for shaking off the Norman yoke. In 1130 a general rise to arms was followed by an attack upon all the fortresses of the frontier. Terrible reprisals followed, and the rising was only a momentary break in the irresistible progress of the Conquest. At the end of the thirteenth century there were about one hundred and forty *Lordship Marches* in Wales, and in all of them tyranny, disorder, and oppression reigned unchecked.

Nevertheless Wales, though considerably diminished in extent, still existed. In the northern extremity, known generally as Gwynedd, a long line of princes, descending from Cuneda, succeeded one another as sovereigns. The hopes of Britain were centred in them, and all its cherished beliefs in a future return to supremacy.

This mountainous part of the country, being more remote and inaccessible than the rest, remained the citadel of the power and ideals of Wales, as well as the sacred source from which its bards drew their inspiration. It was the Welsh home of independence, and from all sides the national hope turned to these princes, living withdrawn in their fastnesses close by the country's venerated Snowdon. Even the subjects of the Lord Marchers looked to them against a power which they had submitted to but never recognised. Though faintly enough, Wales still radiated as a nation from this little corner, where an invincible faith, in the face of every evidence, persisted in seeing itself still unconquered and firm.

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The Conquest of 1282 changed all this. It was but the last act of the drama which for two centuries had been enacted between a passionate race, all dreams and idealism, and one positive, forceful, and steeped in hard practicality—the drama, in fact, between the Celts and the Anglo-Saxons. The enchanter Merlin had no chance against the Norman bastard. He continued, however, to beat a retreat which had already lasted for seven centuries, the Saxons and the Angles

having gradually taken further and further possession of his country. Yet even this had been nothing in comparison to the new enemies. These pursued him even in the remote districts, where, an exile, he lived upon regrets and memories, and vague, sweet hopes for the future. They encroached upon his refuge, marked it with great stone fortresses, and swept away all the laws and traditions of the ancient kingdom. Still Merlin retreated, until all that remained to him was his mountain Snowdon, on whom whosoever went to sleep, it was said, woke with poetic inspiration. Some gorges, a few wild and savage valleys, and a coast ravaged by the sea—in a word Gwynedd, the foggy and lonely region so well adapted to dreams in times of peace and to defence in times of danger—was all that remained to him. It was here that he suffered the last assault. On the 10th of December 1282 an army of Basque mercenaries in the pay of King Edward defeated the Welshmen risen to defend their independence. Adam de Francton killed their chief, Prince Llewelyn ap Griffith, king of North Wales, whom his fellow-countrymen had looked upon as the predestined saviour of Cambria. His head was sent

to London, where King Edward had it crowned with ivy and exposed to view at the Tower, in order that the prophecy might be fulfilled which had foretold that a prince of Wales would one day be crowned in the capital of the English kingdom.

As if the history of Wales had been completely swept away by the English inundation, very few traces of it remain visible upon the soil. At Bangor, whose name recalls its religious origin,—*Al banchor*, the Great Choir or Great Church,—nothing of the past remains at all. Yet once upon a time it was a famous British monastery. Its two hundred monks were massacred by the chief of an Anglo-Saxon colony, who after a victory saw them kneeling unarmed to pray for the salvation of their people, and slew them as they knelt. Opposite to it the Isle of Anglesey recalls Welsh independence only by some few old names and ruins. A poor village on the Western coast, Aberfraw, was once the capital of the kings of North Wales. Close to Beaumaris, the present county town, the map indicates another called Tre-castell. Am I then in Brittany? Tre-castell is one of the oldest residences of the *Tewdor*[1] family. Their name

[1] This is the Welsh name for the English *Tudor*.

is associated here with more than one historical episode. Plas Penmynydd, where Owen Tewdor, grandfather of the founder of the English dynasty, was born, is still in existence. A little farther on, Castell Leiniog, a small square fortress with a tower at each corner and a ruined dungeon in the centre, is still covered with ivy and hidden in trees and shrubberies. It was built by the Earls of Chester and Shrewsbury when they conquered the island in the eleventh century. Finally, at the extreme eastern point, a farm covered with moss and creepers is all that remains of a priory, probably founded in the sixth century by Maelgwn Gwynedd, prince of North Wales. At Baran Hill one sees the stone sarcophagus of the Princess Jeanne, wife of Llewelyn the Great, and the daughter of King John of England. This Isle of Anglesey, so fertile and so healthy, was for a long time the chosen home of its Druids and bards, the centre of Welsh existence. In other places traces of the past are still rarer, and I met none in my wanderings through the counties of Carnarvon and Merioneth, until close to Blae-nau Festiniog, overlooking a big town given up to slate quarries, I came upon an old square tower and a fragment of an ancient

wall. It was the castle of Dalwryddelan, or rather all that remains of it. To judge by the slope on which it is placed, it could never have been a big fortress, but it is the most venerated of all remains of the past national existence, since according to tradition not only was Llewelyn the Great born there, but it was also the last stronghold of North Wales to resist King Edward I.

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The marks of the conqueror have long ago effaced all traces of old Welsh history, and the English fortresses give one everywhere the consciousness of the latter's domination. Conway, at the mouth of the river that bears its name, is the supreme expression of an important national defence. Set as it is on the frontier of the heroic little country, it looks like a crown of towers surmounting the escutcheon of an ancient town. Looking towards the north, one's eyes are immediately arrested by the massive beauty of its presence—blue in the mists of the morning, grey at noon, and black under the gathering shadows of evening. On foggy days it has a ghostly appearance, and under luminous skies takes on an air of Oriental splendour, making it easy to

understand that it was originally founded by a Crusader. It is a fine ruin, just sufficiently dilapidated to have the solemnity of all dead things. The magic setting of a past life it renders imperishable, its very presence is like a demand made upon one to resuscitate its bygone story. In this way history constantly gives us outlines which our own imagination must fill in—laying bare only sufficient glimpses of the past to constitute the framework of the dreams we choose to weave about them.

But at Carnarvon dreams pass into actual realisation. It is not a castle, it is not a fortress, it is not a citadel. Carnarvon is the impersonification of conquest. It is conquest materialised and embodied—it is the will of the conqueror laid visibly and heavily upon the soil of a stricken people. Its huge proportions have the inflexibility of a curse, as if to impose upon the conquered nation eternal silence and immobility. Its high and menacing walls are like a decree of Destiny: they are absolutely bare, and without windows, expressing a mind closed to all entreaty. Against its tyranny every effort and every hope would beat in vain; to the cries of servitude and the murmurings of revolt it would merely

oppose the inaccessibility of its heights and the cruel strength of its thick-set towers. It has the look of being less the work of human hands than of some fabulous builders belonging to the old heroic days when the Cymrics still awaited the return of Arthur. In fact, except for architectural evidence, one could easily believe it to have been erected by some prehistoric Titans in the age of stone. Inside it grows more human. All its life was of necessity concentrated within, behind the ramparts in which the conqueror sheltered himself. The men who lived there were all governed by the feudal system, and some of the details of their existence are still traceable in the ruins that remain. It becomes obvious that these people were encamped in an enemy's country, and were prepared both for sudden attacks and for long-drawn-out sieges. In one of these towers, between four deep walls of stone, Edward the First's eldest son was born. It is said that the king, taking him in his arms, went to one of the windows of the castle, and showing the new-born infant to the people below, cried, "He is born a Welshman, so he shall be your prince." In this fashion Edward of Carnarvon became

Prince of Wales, and so inaugurated the tradition that the eldest son of the English sovereign should always bear this title. The crown of Gwynedd had changed houses and—country.

CHAPTER III

The Strength and Personality of the Welsh

Though the Welsh nation had been too weak successfully to maintain its independence, it was at the same time too inherently strong not to make a desperate struggle against invasion. This extraordinary combination of weakness and strength, which makes both the attraction and the incomprehensibility of the Celtic people, is the same wherever the race is to be found,—in Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and our own French Brittany,—a contradiction wholly tragic, and which psychology alone could satisfactorily explain.

The contemplative nature of the Celt responds to every outward impression, creating from them an inner world which makes him easily forget the actualities of life. Imagination drives

him into the world of art, but not into that of action. In Wales the poetic gift keeps the country to a certain extent above considerations of comfort and practical organisation—things it leaves to a more commonplace people. Generous, imaginative, and unworldly, the nation is even less capable of organisation than of self-government. This inability is further aggravated by another national characteristic. Every historian, no matter what period he handled, remarked among the Celtic race a certain intractability and hot-headedness, making any political advancement impossible. The English still call the people "red-hot Welsh." The whole history of the Celts is one continuous series of rivalries and internecine warfare, whose effect was perpetually to paralyse and disable the race. Cæsar traded on this in his conquest of Gaul. The Saxons made use of it in taking possession of Britain, and later still, in Wales itself, it was the dissensions between the tribes of the North and the South which made the first invasion possible.

The psychology of Cambria explains consequently why it was conquered, but it explains at the same time why it could never be annihilated.

The fundamental instinct of the Welsh character is that of the British race in whatever part of the world it finds itself—endurance. The Celt is at the same time original and unalterable. He can neither be assimilated nor destroyed. He has, like other people obliged to live in a hostile atmosphere, a wonderful faculty for suspending his existence, in order to save it from death or transformation.

Imaginative, obstinate, and idealistic, the Cambrian who during the heroic period of his history occupied almost all Great Britain, would have lost a great deal of his original temperament if he had remained in the rich plains of England and—amalgamated with the general organisation of another race—had passed centuries in a life of comfort, activity, and good order. The actual facts of history admirably preserved his natural character, and when the Anglo-Saxon invasion drove all before it, nature offered him the hospitality of a retreat that nothing could have bettered.

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Like the extremity of Cornwall, the Highlands of Scotland, or the Armorican peninsula, the borders of Wales formed an ideal shelter for the

ancient British. I visited the country during the silence and solitude of the autumn months, and found it supremely what the English describe as romantic. There were mountains hidden in wreaths of grey mists, rocky hills where the grey stone has been worn smooth under its drab-looking grass, broken-looking slopes with a surface quarried by slate workers, and in contrast to this the green and leafy valleys of the glens, with their cascades and mountain streams.

One day when I had gone as far as Carnarvon, I took the Festiniog Railway at Portmadoc, going along a line which rises gradually up a severe incline (the slopes of Moelwyn) into Gwynedd. It is the oldest of all the narrow-gauge railways. Passing through dense woods, it overlooks the depths of a green valley, and then opens out into an arid, stony grey world, until it stops in the middle of a chaos of quarried slate. When I was there, the place was shrouded in fog. I might have been at the North Pole or in the moon and not felt a greater sensation of strangeness. I have never experienced a similar impression of utter novelty—only the railway lines and little motionless carriages recalling the ordinary things of existence. Before this

heaped-up slate—like torn masses of lava—they had a strange and unnatural appearance. Had one stepped into a frozen and deserted planet? No, but merely into the heart of the slate quarries. A wooden rail which went up a slope marked the pathway used by the workmen; the line running along the top was used for the quarry trucks. Half way up, a little slanting roof was visible, and when one's eyes had grown accustomed to the general greyness one perceived a small cottage hanging on, as it were, to the strong flanks of the hillside. In truth, one seemed to have come into a ruined world, inhabited by a primitive population, and so old that time, wearied by the labour of centuries, had stopped short at destroying it. A fine, opaque, imponderable rain, which was nothing else but a pulverised fog, enveloped all the steepnesses of the mountain side, filled the valleys, poured into the gorges, and blurred and drowned the whole outlines of this extraordinary landscape. I followed some workmen who were going along the road. A pair of waterproof overalls covered their legs, and they wore immense boots and tarpaulin hats. No umbrella would have withstood the force of the rain, and would in any

case have been useless. The very air seemed to have turned into a watery dust, and the aerial sea continued to circle, undulate, and to drown everything.

The next morning a fresh breeze had swept away the deluge of the evening before, and the day, alternating between rain and sun, gave us glimpses of blue between the clouds. The train went along wooded hills, where the reddened leaves were already falling; underneath, the valley gleamed in the sunlight. All the landscape had the tremulous movement of a bird trying to attract its mate. I arrived at Bettws-y-Coed,—"The Pearl of Wales,"—a smiling valley, set in a delicious murmuring of leaves and rivulets. I was driven along a good road, pleasantly free of dust, to see the Miner's Bridge, the Swallow's Fall, and the Valley of the Fairies. All I remember is an enchantment of trees and water, hills with sides thickly set with trees, and with tops covered by pine trees, and lower down little bridges carpeted with ivy, under which the torrents swirled madly among the rocks, green pathways wet with spray, and little wooden bridges over green gorges, in which a stream of water churned to the whiteness of snow.

At Bettws-y-Coed, as at the wild and delicious Blae-nau Festiniog, nature is singularly penetrating. Dreams seem to entice one on every side. One's eyes are besieged with pictures that seem to desire to become real and living,—the very wind seems to carry some vague inspiration. These are enchanted places, where imagination feels itself at home, but they are also little closed-in worlds, where desire easily becomes satisfied and self-centred.

Like the Scottish Highlands, the mountainous districts of North Wales favoured the life of clans. Nothing could have lent itself better to these independent communities, with their separate chief or king, than the country's natural division into infinitesimal kingdoms. Geography acted more than once as an accomplice to the individualistic tendencies of the Cambrians. But if she favoured divisions, she also aided resistance. The country was both a refuge and a fortress—the last refuge of a great nation, and the last fortress of her sovereignty. To defend her, the soil itself offered inaccessible ramparts, deep entrenchments, and many hiding-places. No castle has ever equalled this natural architecture, which the enchanter Merlin—" for

this is his own domain"—must surely have had a hand in arranging. Snowdon is its fortress. There are many more beautiful mountains than this height of 3000 feet, but there are none more sacred. The ancient Welsh bards believed that it was sufficient to sleep upon it to wake inspired. When I saw it rising above a perfect entanglement of minor peaks, it was covered in mist, and the neighbouring heights had the look of rising towards it in clouds of offered incense.

The driver turned round when we came to it, and pointing with his whip, said religiously, "Snowdon." We drove along the pass of Llanberis, and by the time we had made the round the summit of Snowdon was completely hidden from view. The Welsh mountains have the faded-looking colouring of autumn, the colouring of shrivelled grass growing on the sides of rocks. When I saw them, great lines of sunlight fell upon them, and only Craigeri[1]—"The Snow-capped Peak"—remained black against the mackerel sky.

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Veiled by mists, it dominates both the landscape and the history of the country. Round its

[1] The Welsh name for Snowdon.

sacred heights the valleys and escarpments of Gwynedd became the refuge of ancient British illusions. It helped the nation of Wales to preserve its personality. Withdrawn from the world, the people lived in memories of the past and hopes for the future. The present could no longer satisfy. Imagination took refuge consequently in the thoughts of former days, and regarding itself as prophetic, believed that what had been, might one day be again. This mirage comforted its wounded pride, eager to possess not only the legend of a dead glory but the anticipation of a living future. These hopes of a transfigured destiny lay treasured for many centuries in the heart of Wales. Deception after deception seemed to it merely so many trials from which the nation would one day emerge with an added lustre—like a sun temporarily eclipsed.

This idea of immortal greatness was symbolised in the famous legend of King Arthur. The old warrior king of Cambria became at last like a Messiah, or rather like the Spanish Cid, whose return was to restore the glories of Castille. He personified the national pride, resistance against foreign domination, and that instinct

for eternity which in the Celtic race is perhaps only a consciousness of unquenchable vitality. The history of Arthur reflects, as in a magic mirror, the history of the Welsh nation. It sums up its greatness, its miseries, and the tragedy of its mysterious destiny. King Arthur conquered the Saxons, but found enemies among those of his own race, and died, unfortunately, not in a struggle against the enemy, but from a wound received from one of his own people. But King Arthur, said the legend, was not dead at all. Many thought that he was, but they were mistaken. He had hidden his wound in the island, where his courageous heart was resting for a time from its labours. But his own knew that one day he would rise again, to the confusion of his ancient enemies.

Such were the fairy tales of this dreaming people, the material from which were woven the songs of bards and the prophecies of the enchanter. It was a land of faith and fancies, in which, to confront the tangible solidity of stone fortresses, there was nothing but a legendary hope and the unsubstantial strength of Celtic idealism. . . .

CHAPTER IV

The Nation's Sleep

Five centuries passed over Wales without destroying the soul whose vitality alone showed the inherent greatness of the nation. It seemed, indeed, as if some forces could neither be stifled nor destroyed. In 1282 the political annexation of Wales took place ; but the other, which no mere act of authority could obtain, and which the will of the conqueror has more than once waited vainly for even time to bring about, had still to be effected. I re-read the history of Wales in the country itself, and it was while face to face with its re-aroused vitality that I realised the long period of torpor into which its original resistance had fallen. One might aptly say, that much as the sleeping beauty of the fairy story, the country had gone to sleep, in order that, refreshed by slumber, it might one day

take up its life again with all the old fulness and splendour. It seemed to have the preservative instinct to suspend existence, sooner than allow it to be transformed by the ways of strangers.

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Edward had only introduced the laws and customs of his own kingdom into that part of the country which he had just conquered. The Marches continued under the government of their own petty sovereigns, who since the destruction of the national dynasty enjoyed an even greater degree of local authority than before. They had no longer to reckon with the superior power of the Gwynedd kings, who until then had reigned supreme. At the same time the English element was slowly gaining ground in the country. Towns were being built, where merchants and artisans were encouraged to settle, and so create commercial centres hostile to Welsh traditions. Day by day the importance and the force of this conquering element increased. And the gulf between it and the rural mass of the population, entrenched behind the impregnability of its ancient manners, language, and customs, widened perpetually. Among the ashes of the past only a touch was needed for

the old fire of patriotism to burst into flame again—the dreams of Owen of Wales or the pride of Owen Glendower were more than sufficient. But Owen of Wales, a prince of the house of Llewelyn, who had taken service with the king of France, was assassinated by an Englishman of his suite, without having even been able to make an effort to realise his dream of restoration. Owen Glendower, after having for fifteen years restored the Welsh monarchy, ended his life a vanquished and submissive rebel. Other revolutionary chiefs went over to the king of England, as in the case of Owen ap Meredith ap Tewdor, who having been appointed groom to Henry v., afterwards secretly married his widow, and so founded the future house of the Tudors.

When the grandson of Owen Tudor, an English prince exiled in France, embarked at Harfleur to try and snatch the crown from the detested person of Richard III., a great hope swept through the hearts of the Welsh people. The red standard floated once more from the heights of Snowdon, the bards broke out into national song, and all the able-bodied men rallied to Tudor's side. Some days later Richard was killed at the battle of Bosworth, and Henry Tudor was crowned

in his place with the title of Henry VII. In the hands of a king of Celtic origin, what might not become of the faithful people whose help had so largely contributed to set him on the throne of their conquerors!

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The country was in a miserable condition, a state of things aggravated by the insurrection of Glendower. While reprisals were taken against those who clung too desperately both to remembrances of the past and to false hopes of the future, a subtle policy was gradually assimilating all those amenable to reason. The aristocracy of Wales accepted posts at the English Court, married into the English nobility, and were educated at one or other of its universities. The mass of the Welsh people were being left more and more isolated and alone. The peasants, rooted to the soil, shut in by their valleys and mountains, remained outside the reach, as it were, of the gradual transformations going on in the upper classes, with the result that they sank perpetually into greater depths of lethargy and destitution. For two centuries the only sign of their existence consisted in two uprisings, as if so deep was their slumber that they were only

capable of acting on the stimulation of a dream. It was this dream whose strength—having to a large extent owed their kingdom to it—the Tudor dynasty mistrusted so deeply. A nation inflexibly opposed to assimilation must, they considered, be wiped out, and they started, therefore, to attack it in its most vital part. Until now the English authority had only interfered with the Welsh in territorial possession and in their administrative and legal organisation; it now attempted to penetrate more deeply, to make war against their customs and even their very language—that supreme expression of national identity. "The Government which made every effort to translate the Bible into the language of the people did not have it translated into Welsh. On the contrary, some Welsh people, zealous supporters of the new Reformation, having published at their own expense a version of the Sacred Writings, far from being praised as they would have been in England, were ordered immediately to destroy every copy of the new edition. All translated Bibles found in the churches were removed and publicly burnt." [1]

[1] Augustin Thierry, *Histoire de la Conquête de l'Angleterre.*

Later on, when Queen Elizabeth with a change of tactics ordered a Welsh translation of the Bible, the fact was not in any way due to a predominance of religious zeal over political policy. The order was simply a piece of political strategy, as one can see by the " proviso " added to the Act of Parliament of 1563, in which the five Welsh bishops are ordered to see that an English prayer-book should henceforward be placed in every Welsh church, so that those who understood the language could make use of it, and those who did not, by comparing the two versions, could as soon as possible gain a knowledge of the English language. With the same intention, William Salisbury, the translator of the New Testament, had already published a Welsh and English dictionary dedicated to Henry VIII. There could be no doubt, therefore, concerning the Tudor attitude towards the language of Wales. Henry VIII. interdicted its use in Courts of Justice, and decreed " that for the future no man making use of the Welsh language could enjoy any fief or office in England, Wales, or any other of the king's domains, under penalty of forfeiture of the said fiefs or offices, unless he was acquainted with and made

use of the English language." The dynasty was not more kindly disposed to any other Welsh tradition or habit, or to records either public or private—to its antiquities or to its curiosities. One became suspect, Augustin Thierry tells us, "by merely going to settle down in Wales: such an action became the cause of a lawsuit in the reign of Queen Elizabeth."

Nothing, therefore, that could reasonably be expected to stifle Welsh national feeling was omitted. It might be extraordinarily strong and persistent; the force of oppression was equally strong and unrelaxing. Finally, the stagnation which had long paralysed the physical actions of the people now extended to their soul. It was hardly stirred by a last faint tremor at the outbreak of the great Civil War in England.

The Stuarts had done nothing for Wales, but it was quite enough for England to be rising against them to kindle the sympathies of the Welsh people, so naturally opposed were they to every English impulse. No doubt, also, the hope of ameliorating their condition as the result of service tendered, encouraged support of the royal house of Scotland. The downfall of the Stuarts was a downfall for Wales also, and

drew upon them considerable increase of oppression. Truly it seemed as if this unhappy nation was beyond all hope,—at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the condition of its people being about as miserable as it well could be.

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Externally nothing now remained of the old Cymric life which had flourished for so many centuries behind the remote fastnesses of Wales. On English soil, under English laws, and oppressed by masters speaking the English language and practising the religion of England, there existed a poor and ignorant population, who seemed like a little colony left forgotten by time—a forlorn fragment dropped off the surface of history. No doubt the people still remembered, but if they did they had entirely abandoned hope. Since their last intervention in favour of the Stuarts they had taken no part in the political events of the kingdom. Energy seemed dead in them, like a stream dried up at its source. The Conquest had completely arrested its intellectual development. True, the landlords since the reign of Henry VII. had been educated at English colleges, and for those of a lower class there were here and there grammar schools at

which the townspeople could get some sort of education. But the mass of the Welsh people, untouched by changes and by any mental progress, lived its obscure life in the middle of a desolate country, tending its cattle, marrying and dying, without feeling anything—or very little—of the great intellectual movements going on during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Religious life was equally quiescent. The Reformation had hardly affected the ignorant mass of the people, while on the other hand no deep sympathy bound them to the Catholic religion, whose intervention had never been exercised in favour of the Welsh nation. Consequently they accepted without a struggle, but also without enthusiasm, a new service which had little interest for them. It made no difference, in their view, whether a clergyman sent by the king or a priest sent by the pope governed their spiritual existence.

The new Church, besides, proved more indifferent and neglectful than the Church of Rome, even at its worst, had ever been. There was no translation of the Bible before 1588, and religious services were held with the greatest irregularity. The bishops, all of whom were English, never

resided in their dioceses. It was enough for them to reap their preferments, and the system of pluralities was universal. The Bishop Luxmoore of Hereford, subsequently elected Archbishop of St. Asaph, acquired for his eldest son an annual revenue of £7618, for his second son one of £1963, and for his nephew one of £830. The poor parish incumbent, on the other hand, was so badly paid, and had such a hard time of it, that it was quite impossible to find men of any culture or standing to undertake the work. He would have three or four churches to look after on a stipend of between £10 to £12 a year. Consequently one reads of places where only two sermons were preached in twelve months; of others where no sermons had been given for five or six years; others, again, where service was only heard every other Sunday. In one parish mentioned (and we are told it was no exception) services had ceased altogether. The vicar neither preached nor registered births, marriages, or burials. "He spent his time in taverns, was a public drunkard and brawler, quarrelling with his parishioners and others."[1] The truth is that the Anglican Church during the eighteenth

[1] *The Welsh People* (Rhys and Brynmor-Jones), p. 464.

century had become simply a political machine ; it had never possessed, at any rate in Wales, the least spiritual vitality.

Taken as a whole, one can say, therefore, that during the first half of the eighteenth century the population of Wales was the most primitive in the kingdom. It seemed like a body in which the soul was dead, and which continued to exist merely through the force of mechanical habit. What had become of the heroic spirit which for ten centuries had made such brave struggles ? The climax was near—a climax which it is only reasonable to expect would have proved a dire calamity. It was, however, to show itself the absolutely unexpected. Persecuted and exhausted, the soul of Wales was spent. To save itself, it crept back into the secret recesses of the national character, and in an impassivity which had every appearance of death waited for the awakening which was to be at the same time a complete resurrection.

CHAPTER V

The Awakening

I HAVE often been enticed into dreams by the castles of Wales. English supremacy erected them—with all their strength and beauty—as a means of control and oppression. But after the lapse of many centuries their original purpose was abandoned. Conway has loosened its grip, and thrown open its girdle of towers, which enclose to-day a little prosperous Welsh village. At Carnarvon the inner courts are covered with grass, and the little town leads its peaceful life gathered round its now defenceless parapets, which it even points out to strangers with a certain touch of pride. Other castles are falling to pieces, kept together only by the ivy sprung from a soil which has recovered little by little what these hostile castles once strove to rob it of.

These buildings, nevertheless, were to me a speaking expression of the vitality of the Welsh nation. For against this material strength contended a subtle and invisible force to which walls and dungeons were superfluous. You look in vain for its architecture. Cambrian endurance erected no fortresses which the enemy might take, and which time could not fail to demolish. It relied upon something more durable than the solidity of stone—the faithfulness of its own soul. It combated swords with nothing stronger than the dazzling gleam of its own hopes. For an immortal energy had taken refuge on the coast of Wales, and we see it reappear after a long eclipse in a kind of brilliant rejuvenation. One has only to look at the bookshops to see this; they are filled with books, pamphlets, and magazines, all written in the Welsh language. It breaks out everywhere also, in poetic and musical competitions, in minor *Eisteddfods* and in the great *Eisteddfod*, an annual gathering to which representatives of every division of Wales gather together, in order to carry on the old traditions of their country. The Welsh language is flourishing, and the national religious services have reduced

Anglicanism to the religion of the minority. National life is everywhere awakening and re-creating an autonomy.

At the same time it is also transforming it, and by doing so reveals sharply nature's aptitude for saving what cannot and must not perish. It was at the very moment when the statute of 1740 consummated its political assimilation that its soul leapt into life again. Having achieved, with so many reasons for annihilation, the miracle of continuing to exist, Wales gradually began to gather strength again. Dispossessed of land and sovereignty, she started to build up a spiritual kingdom that should rise above the reach of injustice and the fatalities of history. Henceforward she dispensed with futile fancies. The throne of Cadwaldr was lost for ever, and King Arthur would come no more except in poems. Like Ireland and Scotland, Wales must eternally form part of the United Kingdom. But though grown loyal enough, the Welsh remained none the less the people of their own country. On the soil of their ancestors still lingered their personal traditions, memories, customs, characteristics, language, and literature. How did this spiritual vitality, one asks, reassert

itself? The answer belongs to the last dramatic incident of its pathetic history—a history as heroic as an ancient epic.

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In the great crises of human life personality is laid bare to the quick, forcing the real essence of character to the surface. When the destiny of Wales had come to its last pass, the eternal idealism which burned at the heart of Celtic genius leapt into a great revivifying flame. The race, withdrawn from agricultural interests, and fascinated by thoughts of death, the unknown, and the beyond, was singularly religious. Religious enthusiasm also was the first sign of returning life, stimulated by a clergy who, poor and insufficient as they were, came from the people and had the same sympathies as their parishioners. They fought against Anglican indifference, against this Church so greatly political and so feebly religious, whose clergy were strangers to their own worshippers in thought, feeling, and language. The religious movement was both national and Nonconformist. It is not possible here to follow either its methods or its progress. It is usual to associate its origin with the name of Griffith Jones of Llandowrar, but

it was Howell Harris and Rowlands, both of Llangeitho, who were responsible for its triumph. It was the extraordinary eloquence of these men's preachings that, in the face of the most violent persecutions, roused the people from their apathy. The result we know: in 1735 there were eight Nonconformist chapels in North Wales. To-day there are 1,500,000 Nonconformists to about 200,000 of the Anglican persuasion. This immense majority makes it only fair that the Anglican Church should cease to be the established one of Wales. And on several occasions the people, as in the case of the anti-tithe war, have violently manifested their desire for Disestablishment. The religious revival produced a very wide reverberation. It sent a tremor through the whole of the Welsh nation, rousing it so completely that from that moment it regained consciousness of its own personality. From the beginning the movement had the good fortune to be led by great preachers; pulpit eloquence in Great Britain never rose to greater heights than in these little Welsh communities. The movement, purely religious at first, soon passed beyond its original limits. It was, in fact, says Professor Rhys, "the new

birth of a people. It would be going too far to say that it created a new national character —that, of course, was impossible; but it profoundly changed and strengthened the mental and moral qualities of the Welsh-speaking people. In the highly-strung and sensitive natures it produced a saintly type equal to any afforded by the literature and tradition of the Church. Among the people, who as a whole threw themselves into the movement, it developed intellectual powers which may have before existed, but which were only imperfectly utilised. It induced men who had never indulged in speculation to raise and to discuss fundamental religious and philosophic problems, and stimulated to an extraordinary degree the argumentative and imaginative faculties of a naturally quick-witted race." [1]

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It was in this fashion that a religious renaissance paved the way for an intellectual one, whose principal leaders were the impassioned clergy who in a few years sprung up under the influence of the Reformation. At the beginning of the seventeenth century few educated Welsh-

[1] *The Welsh People*, p. 474.

men could speak their own language, and the lower classes who could speak it did not know how to write it. The use of the Welsh Bible, fortunately translated into excellent Welsh, saved the language from degenerating into the vulgar dialect generally in use. In the Sunday schools instituted for scriptural instruction, the common people learned to read, and so were gradually led into the paths which were to end finally, a century and a half later, in the revival of the *Eisteddfods* and in the establishment of a Welsh University. The *Eisteddfod* is sufficiently well known in France to make a description of it superfluous. One knows that this assembly, or more literally speaking this *session*, which fell into disuse in the seventeenth century, owing to the abandonment of the Welsh language and literature, reappeared in the nineteenth upon an enlarged and altered basis. It has become the occasion for social and economic discussions, as well as the meeting-place for Welshmen from every part of the principality, or for that matter, from every part of the United Kingdom. It is a sort of spiritual parliament for the country of Wales. The *Eisteddfod* of Cardiff in 1898 brought together representatives of every Celtic com-

munity, and prepared the way for the great Congress of Dublin in 1900. The national *Eisteddfod* is, according to the desires of those who revived it, only one thread in a great scheme of patriotism. Similar assemblies are multiplied in the other counties, forming a sort of intellectual organisation, quite superior to the Sunday schools. These schools themselves were only the rough beginnings of the developments of the present day; for, thanks to the Bill of 1889 (Intermediate Education Act, Wales), secondary education was established in the country, and through the Bill of 1893 the Welsh University was started.

In the expansion of this supreme expression of its intellectual life the Welsh nation was helped, almost unconsciously, by the natural law of cause and effect. Religious reform produced its own logical consequences. The new need for Nonconformist ministers necessitated a training-school for the ministry. Theological colleges were founded. As a set-off to this, the Established Church found herself driven, if she was to compete with this new ministry, also to establish colleges from which she could recruit her Welsh clergy, knowing the

people and speaking their language. In 1827 St. David's College was founded under the auspices of the English Church, and was almost immediately invested with power to confer degrees on the students. The Welsh party tried in vain to get them to found a College independent of religious creed. In 1853, as if through the inevitable force of circumstances, arose the idea of a national University. It had been arrived at gradually, through the establishment of the Pupil Teachers' School at Bangor in 1862, and the College of Aberystwith in 1872. Every class of Welsh society subscribed to the last undertaking, to whose significance they were keenly alive, and for which they readily gave, after the first contribution of £12,000, a subscription which rose in twelve years to a sum of £60,000. In 1882 the Government granted it an annual subsidy of £4000. In 1883 a new College was erected in Cardiff for South Wales, and in 1884 one for North Wales at Bangor. The Executive Committee whose business it was to realise the project of a Welsh University, had found at least the practical solution of the difficulty. It founded colleges giving a University education, though the students had actually to take their degrees in

London. The organs were created, and their functional use could not but follow. In 1893 a Parliamentary Bill invested the Welsh University with full rights and privileges. At the death, moreover, of its first President, Lord Aberdare, Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, (now King Edward), was unanimously selected to fill his place, and was formally installed at Aberystwith on the 26th of June 1896.

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Religious and intellectual autonomy correspond to deep-rooted national needs, which do not necessarily, however, demand political autonomy also. At the same time, one is not surprised that so inherent and so powerful an individuality should desire some safeguard of its resuscitated patriotism—some material consecration of its supreme victory. There is no question, as we have already said, of political separation. From the point of view of general government the twelve counties of Wales are no less English than the Scottish, or any other counties in the kingdom. Nevertheless, Wales still demands the granting of certain political privileges. The moderate Nationalists in the House of Commons petition for administrative autonomy; the

advanced party demand a Welsh Parliament, whose official language should be Welsh. Already since 1889 the principality has obtained the right of electing its own County Councils.

Under the general laws of the English constitution the old Welsh nation has gradually recovered an independent existence, which growing as it does stronger every day, attests a vitality against which no oppression could hope to prevail. For seven centuries the Anglo-Norman dynasty did its worst against the conquered races. The various vicissitudes of this attitude can equally be seen in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. The history of these nations, all for so many years politically annihilated, and yet all so ardently alive, is a wonderful example of the triumph of a collective soul with a passionate desire for existence. But through what eclipse, and with how great a lessening of their old power, have not the Welsh expiated the illusions of an excessive sensibility? A fanciful idealism was but a poor weapon to use against a strong arm and a disciplined temperament. Still, though much was lost, much was still preserved intact. Its traditions, its memories, and its language, these were the

weapons with which Wales defended the subtle essence no conquest could wrench from its people. It is just this that makes her history so pathetic. It reveals to us the supreme greatness of a people who in the drama of their existence first struggled to retain the country they had developed, passionately flinging themselves against the forces that were struggling to overwhelm them, and who, finally defeated, yet remained victorious by the sheer vitality of a soul too ardent for anything but immortality.

Printed by Morrison & Gibb Limited, *Edinburgh.*

M311811